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WORSHIP AS EXPERIENCING GOD
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POSSIBILITIES FOR LITURGICAL RENEWAL WITHIN METHODISM

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of
School of Theology at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Religion

by
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PREFACE

This dissertation is not intended to be a comprehensive survey in the area of worship, but rather an introduction to possible liturgical renewal within the Methodist tradition. The approach of the paper has been both theological and historical, but I have sought throughout to relate both theology and history to the contemporary situation. I hope to show in this paper a theology of worship which has practical implications in the lives of men. Examining the history of worship, especially as it relates to the Methodist Church, I have endeavored to indicate the power and the relevancy of worship for the church today.

I welcome the opportunity of acknowledging my deep indebtedness to those persons who helped to make this paper a reality: To my wife Barbara for her love and encouragement and for her help in editing this paper; to my mother and father for their love and support; to Dr. Richard Cain for his help in formulating this paper; to Drs. K. Morgan Edwards and Robert Arnott for their guidance; to Mrs. Robert McMahon and Mrs. M. Higar for typing; and to Rev. Hans Holborn and the members of the Riviera Methodist Church for their concern.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

We are at the end of one era in the life of prayer and worship and at the beginning of another. We are coming to be aware with Paul, that, 'We do not know how to pray as we ought;' we are beginning to recognize with honesty the dreadful state of our 'prayer life' and our 'worship experience.' After a long period of attempting to 'create an experience,' through whatever devices we had at hand, usually psychological gimmicks, we are facing the sterility and shallowness of such manipulations of ourselves; and we are seeing the strange (and unchristian) lordliness which supposes that before we ever begin such experimentation and invention, we are already possessed of full understanding of the worship of God.¹

Statement of the problem. As the Christian Church seeks to be renewed, not only in terms of its liturgy, but in terms of its total life, it must truly ask,

'Lord, teach us to pray.' Teach us how to worship thee in spirit and in truth that truly thy kingdom may come and thy will be done upon this earth even as it is in heaven. Lord, help us so to praise and glorify thy name, that thy presence may be made known to all men everywhere.²

The Church must develop a liturgy which will enable men to respond in adoration and joyous self-dedication to God's revelation of Himself and His redeeming grace. The supreme act of Christian worship is, in the words of the New English Bible, "to offer your

¹Wesley Order of Common Prayer (Nashville: Board of Education of the Methodist Church, 1957), p. 7.

²Ibid.

very selves to Him, a living sacrifice, dedicated, and fit for His acceptance, the worship offered by heart and mind."³ It is heartening to realize that, at a time when Christians are perhaps more aware of the tragic estrangement of the world from the Church than ever before, God is so plainly calling us to rediscover together the joy, the depth, and the power of Christian worship.

In recent years the Christian Church has come to recognize its inadequacy, especially in the area of worship; and, as a result, there has been a great interest in liturgical renewal. The Church now recognizes that if the life of a worshiping congregation is to be vital, it must be brought into a new understanding of what worship is. The liturgical renewal movement is seeking to deal with the problem of exaggerated individualism which has dominated worship for the past two hundred years. It is seeking to restore the supernatural authority of revelation and the truly divine—human character of worship. The exegetical discoveries of the past decades has given valuable support to liturgical renewal. This discovery has helped men to understand that to be the Church is to be the body of Christ. The movement has taught us that Christianity is not a personal, private affair between the individual and God; nor is the Church just a collection of individuals who have a taste for religion. Christianity is rather the corporate adventure of men as they seek to be united with God into the body of Christ. The task of the

³Romans 12:1.

Church then is to develop a meaningful and relevant liturgy which can lift men to new heights in their understanding and application of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Definition of Worship. William O'Shea speaks of worship as "man's response to reality, the recognition of the purpose of his being, which is to praise and glorify God."⁴ To a somewhat frustrated twentieth century, this definition of worship can have significance and meaning. This age is characterized by its alienation and meaninglessness, and consequently, by searching for meaning in life. The goal of worship is to allow men to find this meaning through the adoration of God. The Christian existentialist has much to offer worship for he can help men discover that true worship is intrinsic; it reaches into the deepest inner hungers of man and seeks to stimulate his soul. Through a uniting of God with man, worship allows man to see life as it can be—a life which is truly in Christ Jesus. Therefore, worship must be something to which man can respond actively, so that ultimately it becomes his way of life. It must enable man to understand the meaning of life in relationship to God; and, in turn, allow men the opportunity of becoming the body of Christ. The time has come for men of the Christian faith to give this serious consideration.

⁴William O'Shea, The Worship of the Church (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1958), p. 9.

To accomplish this task, men must study the past as it applies to the present within a liturgical framework. They must not take the past purely in retrospect, but focus on those aspects of history which best proclaim the Christian Gospel. Then they must take the related forms of worship and make them relevant to modern man. Christian worship must be more than the reading and exposition of what God has said and done in history. To be relevant Christian worship has to exist meaningfully in the here and now. Just because a liturgy was meaningful to men in the sixteenth century does not make that same liturgy meaningful today. Yet, if we are able to see what it was that made that liturgy relevant and how it spoke the Christian Gospel to those men, then we might see new possibilities for communicating the Gospel in our age. This becomes the purpose of the following paper—to see in the tradition related to Methodism possible areas of liturgical renewal within its nature. For Methodism to be a vital force in the name of Jesus Christ, the message of the Gospel must be enacted in a form and proclaimed in an idiom which is comprehensible and applicable by those who enact it. Worship must enable men to experience God in such a way that his entire way of life becomes a celebration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The liturgy, as the origin of the word indicates, must be the public work of the people. It is concerned with the ordering of society - at the level of the holy and at the level at which it is the transforming Spirit of Christ. It is not concerned with a

special world all of its own, but with applying the sacred in an effort to transform the secular. Yet, too often this is not what many worship services say or do. They appear to take the congregation out of this world instead of bringing this world (in all its secularity) into the presence of Christ. It is only at the dining-room table or over the coffee break that many people can experience or see the potential power of Christian faith. The sanctuary is just too religious for 'secular' man to see his secular life as a sacred reality.

The liturgy must be the agent which can allow the individual worshiper to see his life as it is lived daily, and ascertain that it is being changed into a life of holiness. The liturgy must not be so ordered that the worshiper sees no relationship or possibility for growth within his own life or feels the liturgy completely unrelated to his existence. Methodism, with its rich liturgical foundation, must seek to renew its liturgy to help men in their struggles to live Christian lives. Taking its historical heritage, Methodism must seek anew to challenge men to go on to perfection.

When an individual studies John Wesley's thoughts and feelings on worship, he immediately is confronted by a variety of opinions proposed by historians. Many hold the thought that throughout his life John Wesley remained a high churchman, completely liturgical. Other historians propose a combination theory; that is, that Wesley was influenced by Anglican, Moravian, and Puritan traditions. Still others state that Wesley developed his own service of worship,

relying less and less on the Liturgy of the Church of England.⁵ In seeking to uncover biblical and theological elements of the Methodist liturgical tradition, I found traces of all three positions. Actually, the way in which Wesley's position on worship is interpreted depends a great deal upon the particular period of his life to which one is speaking and to which situation he was addressing himself.

Organization of remainder of dissertation. This paper will at its conclusion list possibilities for liturgical renewal within contemporary Methodism through a study of its history and tradition. There is a great need today in the Church for an understanding of the meaning and the message which worship must have if truly the Church Universal is to become the body of Christ. The first section of the paper (Chapter II) will be concerned with aspects of the history of the liturgy which were an influence on Wesley's thinking. Wesley was well learned in New Testament thought and knew the importance it placed on the spiritual worship of God. Tracing this liturgical tradition through the history of the Catholic Church, the Reformation, and the Church of England, he was aware of the meaning and significance of worship in the life of the Church of Jesus Christ. The next

⁵For an examination of these three positions see the works of Nolan Harmon, Rites and Rituals of Episcopal Methodism (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1926); R. J. Cooke, History of the Ritual of the Methodist Episcopal Church (Cincinnati: Jennings and Pye, 1900); Horton Davies, Worship and Theology in England 1690 - 1965 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961-1965); John Bishop, Methodist Worship in Relation to Free Church Worship (London: Epworth Press, 1950).

section of the paper (Chapters III and IV) will follow the line of Wesley's thinking as he developed his liturgical framework. Living in eighteenth century England, he was aware of and influenced by the Anglican, Moravian, and Puritan traditions. Taking his knowledge of history and the influential factors of his environment, Wesley was able to develop a liturgy based on man's experiencing the reality of God's presence.

Chapter V will be a historical picture of the liturgy since the time of Wesley. Worship in the Methodist Church has taken many turns in the two hundred years since its conception. Chapter VI will give special attention to the current liturgical thinking, with emphasis being placed on the recent Book of Worship. The last section (Chapter VII and VIII) will be a proposal for possible action within the Methodist tradition. Chapter VII will give the theological framework for worship while Chapter VIII will give possible settings for application of the basic principle. Wesley thought of worship as the praising of God, the sharing in the common life in Christ's body, the building up of Christian faith and love, and the sharing in the witness and service of the Church to the world. Worship for Wesley was truly the experiencing of God in and through life.

CHAPTER II

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HISTORY

To gain a perspective on Methodism's understanding of and relationship to worship, attention must first be given to where it stands in relationship to the development of the first liturgies. As an individual studies the thoughts and practices of John Wesley concerning the subject of worship, he becomes aware that Wesley was a learned scholar of the New Testament and the early Church, and that Wesley's appreciation and respect for the Liturgy of the Church of England was based upon his understanding of the worship of early times.

Through studying the New Testament and through actual experiences in worship, Wesley came to recognize the need for a renewal in the worship practices of the church. He saw clearly that worship was not merely to be the recitation of a formalized liturgy or the expounding of extemporaneous prayers and sermons, but that worship was to be the uniting of individuals with God through Christ. This union could come through faith expressed by individuals in and through the acts of the liturgy. Wesley studied carefully the origins of the Christian Church to try and determine what was lacking in the very spirit of the worship of his day. This chapter will be a brief analysis of the history of the liturgy up to Wesley's time, with a concern given to those factors which have been influential in

Methodist worship practices.

1. WORSHIP IN THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH

The early church patterned its worship after the form with which they were most familiar, that of the Jewish synagogue.¹ With the addition of the Lord's Prayer, the Jewish service of prayer, praise, scripture reading, and exposition remained almost intact. Within this somewhat simple structure, the early Christians added the Eucharist or Lord's Supper. Many writers claim that the early Christians separated the Lord's Supper from the existing liturgical structure as was done in later times.² Anyone was welcomed to the instruction service, but only believers could attend the Eucharist.

Cullmann says that the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist were one, and that only later did there develop the separated Eucharist.³ Cullmann feels that when the Lord's Supper came to be thought of as a ritual meal rather than a proper meal, that it was then that there began to develop two parts of the worship service; and those who were not fully indoctrinated into the church were asked to leave following the proclamation of the

¹George Hedley, Christian Worship (New York: Macmillan, 1953), p. 17.

²For example see Hans Leitzman, An History of the Early Church (Cleveland; World, 1963), I, 131-220.

³Oscar Cullmann, Early Christian Worship (London: S.C.M. Press, 1963), pp. 26-32.

Word while the faithful remained for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Cullmann states,

Thereby it (Lord's Supper) ceases to be the general framework of the whole gathering for worship and becomes a second act which forms, with the first act of proclamation, still only 'one' service, but which is much less closely bound to it than formerly. This development seems to me, therefore, in direct contradiction of the commonly accepted view, to have taken place not in the direction of a combination of two originally different services but rather in the sense of an at first gradual separation into two acts.⁴

The early Christians joined together in the home of one of its members to celebrate as a united body the presence of Christ.

In studying the worship of the early church, the thoughts of Cullmann begin to fit into place. Membership among early Christians was based upon an individual's faith in Christ and not so much on formalized training and instruction as to the beliefs which had been set down. Worship was not structured in the sense of set creeds and prayers, but was a logically structured process which sought to allow the worshiper to come into the presence of God through Christ. Dom Gregory Dix states it this way:

The eucharist is the vital expression toward God of what the church fundamentally is, a corporate 'holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.' (1 Peter 2:5)...If the whole eucharist is essentially one action, the service must have a logical development as one whole, a thrust towards that particular action's fulfillment, and not merely a general purpose of edification. It must express clearly by the order and connection of its parts what the action is which it is about, and where the service as a whole is going.⁵

⁴Ibid., p. 31.

⁵Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy (London: Dacre Press, 1964), p. 2.

The early Christian liturgy, as historians have sought to piece it together, sought to establish this unity of purpose; and in the eighteenth century Wesley tried to re-establish this concept of worship. He was not so much concerned with the set structure of the liturgy as he was with whether the order of worship brought individuals into relationship with their God and their neighbors.

Another consideration to ponder when examining early Christian worship is, What was the specific goal of the gathered community? To put it more succinctly, Why was it that the early Christians felt compelled to maintain some kind of united activity following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? It has been seen that the outward form arose out of the Jewish tradition, but the aim of the early Christian gatherings represented something quite new. The life of Christ made a unique impact on the very nature of their worship.

In the Gospel of John, these words are written, "believe me, the hour is coming and now is when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."⁶ The early Christian worshipers were not so much concerned with the expression of their faith in written creeds and set prayers as they were with developing the "life of God" in the souls of men.⁷ They perceived

⁶ John 4:21, 23-24.

⁷ Ephesians 4:17-24: "Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord,

the life of a Christian to be a spiritual co-existence with God in Christ. Any external means, such as doctrinal symbols or liturgical framework, are valuable only so far as they can be a means to this end. The promise of Christ's presence among them and the assurance when they worshiped that He was, compelled the followers of Jesus to maintain union with Him through Worship.

As the Church became more secure in its position within society, this dimension of the spiritual life of the worshiper disappeared. The external means became the important requirement, rather than the gathering of like-minded persons into the body of Christ. Wesley was aware that this communal dimension was lacking in the liturgy of the Church of England, and was thrilled when he found it within the life of the Moravian community. He knew that many persons would just go through the acts of the liturgy without ever becoming changed individuals. This realization of a lack of power in the liturgy came from his own personal experience. More about this will be mentioned in the next chapter, but it is important to point out here that an essential element of the early Christians was the

that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds; they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart; they have become callous and have given themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness. You did not so learn Christ!-- assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus. Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."

emphasis they placed on the spiritual worship of God. This spiritual worship was experienced when they united into one congregation as the body of Christ, and Wesley was anxious that his followers know the potential of spiritual worship. Many times he emphasized the importance of the work of the Spirit, and of the actual participation with Christ in the proclamation of his Word and Sacrament.

What is the aim of the gathering of this spiritual community? The purpose is to 'build up' the community as the Body of Christ, the spiritual body of the risen Lord. Because the Church (gathered community) is built up, it is the spiritual body of the risen Christ himself. It is also possible to say that Christ is shown forth in the gathering of the community.⁸ As two or three are united together in the name of Christ, he comes into the midst of them in such a way that he actually takes form in the gathering.

The purpose of building up the Church as the body of Christ is served by all the different parts identified in the early Christian gatherings: breaking of bread, reading, proclamation, confession, prayer, doxology, blessing, hymns in liturgical and free form. It is not as though in all this only man as such acted. The assembled community is much more the organ which Christ employs in order to show forth his body as the Church. For this reason special gifts of the Spirit are required in the performance of those various elements of worship and the gathering for worship is in reality a gift of God to men.⁹

Here is seen the basic premise upon which the early church founded its worship. Through the presence of the Holy Spirit, man is

⁸Cullmann, op. cit., p. 33.

⁹Ibid., p. 34.

able to look backwards in time to the crucified and risen Jesus and at the same time look forward to the coming of Christ. The prayers, petitions, and proclamations are all means to that end. The worshiper stands on the threshold of a new life - a life in Christ. Time no longer becomes a factor, for as the words "Do this in remembrance of me" are put into action, the Spirit brings the past into the present. Cullmann states it this way:

In Christianity the Spirit is the future which in virtue of the past actualizes itself in the present. This time-character of the Holy Spirit, connecting him with the history of salvation, where it is no myth that is represented, but the Christ event of the present is closely bound up with the historical facts of past time and the facts of the last days still in the future.¹⁰

Methodism stands in this tradition. Wesley put great emphasis on the 'witness of the spirit,' especially as it related to worship. For it was on May 24, 1738, that the Spirit came into his life and he felt his heart strangely warmed. Wesley felt the need to restore within the Church of England the concept that a life in Christ did not come through reading or observance, but as an individual came to find peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.¹¹ Worship was to be as the early Christians had experienced it, the uniting of man through Christ in a life of God.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 36.

¹¹Abel Stevens, The History of Methodism (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1858), 1, 30.

II. FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE ROMAN MASS

Methodism has always been conscious of the need for structure and organization within its life to maintain its very existence. John Wesley himself lived a very ordered and disciplined life and everything he did was done in a structural way. So, too, theologically was he partial to structure. One can see, as Wesley seems to have, that throughout history the liturgy had a definite form and that there were certain elements which were necessary for its performance. As time went by, the list of essentials became more elaborate; but from the beginning there were definite acts which were necessary to keep the liturgy "valid." There are two important dimensions which come to Methodist worship out of the Roman Mass. First, that worship must have order if it is to bring men into the presence of God; this being the objective nature of worship. Second, the Mass gives a sense of historical perspective. The liturgy unites men of all ages and all times in the glory and power of Jesus Christ.

By the middle of the second century, many of the features which are familiar to us today were already present within the liturgy. Justin Martyr (c. 148) speaks of the parts of liturgy as (1) the reading of Scripture; (2) a sermon based on it; (3) the prayers for all classes of men; (4) the kiss of peace; (5) the oblation of bread and the cup of wine and water; (6) the long exercise of praise, prayer and thanksgiving offered by the president at his discretion and responded to by the people with (7) Amen; (8) the administration

to those present and by the deacons to the absent; (9) the almsgiving.¹² It is not until the late Fourth Century that the liturgy became fixed and ordered. When the Mass appeared, the liturgy no longer maintained the primitive freedom of extempore prayer and fixed forms, but presented a very definite shape and text.

Much of the setness and structure of the liturgical forms came as a result of habit rather than through church law.¹³ A prayer was said in the same way and with the same words over a long period of time, that finally it was written down. Then the officiants were no longer able to freely use them, but were bound by them.

In the early fifth century, this set way of conducting the worship service became known as the Mass and became the basic Christian form of worship. Each jurisdiction of the Church worked out its own understanding of the liturgy in relation to its environmental situation; but as one carefully examines these variations, it becomes evident that they are all based upon the same underlying principle.¹⁴ There is a similar background of the Eucharistic service upon which all the liturgies have been modeled. No matter how simple or complex the liturgical forms may have become, behind all of them is the early Christian form of Eucharistic tradition. Most

¹²Francis Procter and Walter Frere, A New History of the Book of Common Prayer (London: Macmillan, 1920), p. 433.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 434.

Protestant worship today, Methodist included, is derived from the primitive Christian Eucharist by way of the standardized liturgy of Rome.¹⁵

Gregory Dix in his book, The Shape of the Liturgy, develops the thesis that the early Church's worship is influenced by what he calls the "Four Action Shape of the Liturgy."¹⁶ These four actions he speaks of as being basic to the liturgy are: (1) Offertory, bread and wine are taken and placed on the table together; (2) Prayer, the president gives thanks to God over bread and wine together; (3) Fraction, the bread is broken; (4) Communion, the bread and wine are distributed together.¹⁷ It is the logical sequence of these four parts coherently fulfilling one complete action which he calls the "Shape of the Liturgy."

They are all part of the standard structure of the liturgy, and they were formed in the semi-Jewish Church of the Apostolic age. They persisted and indeed became the essence of the Mass because they were Apostolic and because they met the needs of an expanding Catholic Church. The basic 'action' has been interpreted many different ways, and the theologies that define those interpretations have varied a great deal, but they vary only within certain limits while they interpret one and the same 'action'. When the standards

¹⁵Hedley, op. cit., pp. 18-19.

¹⁶Dix, op. cit., pp. 48-102.

¹⁷Ibid. p. 418.

are changed, it will be found that some of the primitive fullness of the Eucharist has been lost. As centuries passed the four actions became very elaborate, almost to the point of being obscured, but they have always been present in one form or another.

Methodism's heritage is based on just this principle. The service is structured in such a way that the worshiper is enabled to discover who he is in relationship to God. The "parts" of the liturgy allow the worshipers to become united as the body of Christ. Methodism's inheritance of a concern for form, stemming from the Mass through the Anglican liturgy, has been a valuable tool in effective worship.

Also, much can be learned from a study of those factors which have weakened the Mass. The failure of a strict structure are also historically apparent and likewise provide liturgical guidelines. Dix lists several reasons for the Mass losing its power and meaning.¹⁸ First, there was negation of the nature of the liturgy as corporate action. The celebrant became the sole person to offer for he alone could say the prayers. Finally the celebrant came to be the only one who took the elements, and the people lost all contact with the power of the liturgy. Second, the Mass became important in itself, whether or not people were present. Ten masses performed would be better than five. All that was required was the activity of the priest as he celebrated the Mass.

¹⁸Ibid, pp. 615-625.

Another factor which gradually weakened the Mass was its use of Latin. When the majority of the people no longer spoke Latin, the Mass became only symbolic action. The language barrier excluded most people from any intelligent participation in the church. Fourth, the laymen became totally excluded from ever seeing the Mass for the priest's back was all there was to see. The only part to be viewed by the people was the elevation of the elements. The liturgy was no longer the work of the people but now became a power in itself. From a beginning point of the liturgy as the action of the people, the Mass developed into the action of the priest as a sacrificial feast. The Reformers sought to restore the Mass to its original intention. The Protestant Church in its attempt to be non-Catholic went to the other extreme of unstructured worship. In the recent liturgical renewal movement, Protestants have seen the importance of the objective and the historical nature of worship.

In concluding this section, the Mass has been the agent through which much of the early Christian practices have been maintained and sustained. Without this liturgical framework, much of our knowledge of the early church would have been lost. Worship for the most part is based upon the needs of man in a particular time and place. Through its history the Mass preserved for the Church today, a good understanding of man's need to search for God, and an understanding also of the way in which this need has been seen within the Christian tradition.

The Mass has helped to give to contemporary man a sense of

urgency concerning a basic goal in worship. Worship cannot be contemporary just for the sake of being contemporary, but can be relevant only as it seeks to give man true direction in his life. As Methodism comes to some understanding of its place within this liturgical spectrum, it must be careful that it remains cognizant of the history of the Church. Methodism has a unique heritage in that it was born out of the Mass, but that it also has roots in the witness of the Spirit which has its origins in the Apostolic age. Methodism has taken history seriously as it seeks to incorporate the essence of worship into its very core. It has seen the importance of structure and order within its life while at the same time it has sought to interpret the relevance of history that preserves the continuity with the faith of all ages. The primary form from which the Methodists have worked has been the Mass.

III. FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE REFORMATION

There are several general principles which came out of the Reformation and which are beneficial to our understanding of the working of the church. The Reformation created new forms of worship which were decendents of the older order. Many grievances were expressed by the reformers; but as they sought to develop a liturgy, the Mass was always inherent in their inspiration. "The reformers looked out upon a church plagued with a multitude of superstitions, some gross and wholly evil in their effects, some merely quaint and

fanciful, but all equally irrelevant to the Christian religion."¹⁹

They were not so much disturbed with the structure of the Mass as they were with the ecclesiastical hierarchy who performed the liturgy. One of the cries of the Reformation was a return to simplicity. This was especially true of Calvin. His model of the church was the ancient church which was in existence "prior to the papacy," and he felt that all the formality and ritualism had come to overshadow the meaning of worship.²⁰ Not only was the Mass in a foreign tongue, but much of it was said secretly by the priest. It was almost as if the laity were not to be a part of the Mass. Many of the reformers shared with Calvin his belief in a need for a return to simplicity.

The reformation also brought a renewed importance to the proclamation of the Word in relation to worship. Luther and Calvin insisted that the word be preached each time the sacrament was given.²¹ Preaching was seen as an agency for the imparting of the faith, for the instruction and confrontation with God's judging and redeeming world. Luther proposed that Christians should not assemble for worship unless a sermon was preached; he went as far as to outline a service of the Word that should be conducted every morning and evening

¹⁹Ibid., p. 627.

²⁰John Dillenberger and Claude Welch, Protestant Christianity (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), p. 194.

²¹Ibid., p. 50.

in place of the daily Masses.²²

In the spring of 1523, Luther issued instructions concerning worship in his paper "Concerning the Ordering of Divine Worship in the Congregation." He concluded that paper this way:

This is the sum of the matter: that everything shall be done so that the Word prevails... We can spare everything except for the Word. We profit by nothing so much as by the Word. For the whole Scripture shows that the Word should have free course among Christians. And in Luke 10, Christ himself says: 'One thing is needful' -- that Mary sit at the feet of Christ and daily hear His Word.²³

Luther failed to see, however, that the preached nor the written word itself is the Word of God. They become the Word of God only when they come alive in the heart and mind of man through the Spirit. And Word and Sacrament are each dependent upon the other for their fulfillment of the worship experience.

From a theological perspective, Luther and Calvin placed a renewed emphasis on the resurrection. The Roman liturgy, as it had emerged, enshrined a realistic interpretation in terms of the great sacrifice of Christ.²⁴ Yet it had come to the point that the climax of the liturgy was no longer communion, but the Elevation of the consecrated elements. Luther insisted that there is no sacrifice. All

²²Bard Thompson, Liturgies of the Western Church (Cleveland: World, 1965), p. 98.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Neville Clark, Call to Worship (London: SCM Press, 1960), p. 23.

that is offered to God is the prayers of the rite. "The Body and Blood of Christ are not offered to God, but to the communicants. There is still a eucharistic action, even an action of Christ; but the church does not enter into it."²⁵

Without losing the historical character and the religious values of the Latin Mass, Luther and Calvin were able to renew the liturgy. They believed in the church as the community of believers, and they were able to instill within the liturgy a new faith. This faith was anchored in a common faith in a common Lord. "In worship they give thanks to God's marvelous mercy, confess their sins, hope to be renewed in mind and spirit, hear the meaning of particular passage of scripture interpreted by ministers -- all in the faith that God will make himself known for their daily existence."²⁶ They sought to make religion and worship an individual experience based on faith within a corporate setting. Man comes to worship with his own particular existence and seeks through communion with other worship to come into the presence of almighty God. Wesley, two centuries later, incorporated many of these thoughts and practices of the reformation into his understanding of worship.

Our task today is to develop a concept of worship, based upon an understanding of the New Testament and Church history, which will relate to the contemporary setting. This does not mean a return to

²⁵Dix, op. cit., p. 634.

²⁶Dillenberger, op. cit., p. 48.

a primitive worship setting or to a reformation liturgy, but it does mean that we must be willing to search the past and to understand its comprehension of the Christian Gospel. The reformers sought to renew the Christian Gospel by incorporating within the liturgy those dimensions which they perceived as New Testament and early Church. In many cases they dismissed tradition as meaningless for it related to the pope. At this point exception should be taken with their position. The task is to use the history of the early church and the spirit of the reformation to understand our heritage and to renew the essence of our worship.

IV. CONCLUSION

To examine the history of the liturgy is important to the liturgical movement today. Throughout its history, with relatively few exceptions, Christian worship has been liturgical. This means that it has been structured, ordered, and prescribed as to general outline and content. The historic churches all have their historic liturgies whose foundations date from the early church. These liturgies vary from very simple to elaborate and complex, but they are all originally grounded in the same background. In this way, the liturgy has been a force which has always united Christians into one body.

Thus, the liturgy has been a work of large dimension and universal significance. Too often, it has been thought of as a program prepared by a pastor for an individual congregation. This service

may include many of the elements of liturgical worship, such as lessons, prayers, hymns, and responsive readings; but such a worship program, however balanced and beautiful is of local and temporary significance. Because it has been privately prepared for a specific situation, it has no continuity with the past. Many times this program is usually designed as a preliminary to the sermon.

The liturgy, in its historic sense, is quite different. It is the work and possession of the whole church. It has been carefully prepared and authorized by a general church body. Over a large area it is used by many congregations. It is based on the cycle of a year. It includes a certain fixed framework for every service which is celebrated throughout the year, but has an abundance of rich material from which to draw. The beliefs, needs, and desires of men are expressed through an unchanging order for confession, proclamation, and dedication. John Wesley was aware of this power of the liturgy and sought to instill it within the people called Methodists. Through his study of the historic church, Wesley gave to Methodists a liturgy in which he believed, one which reflected his confidence in the Anglican liturgy, and which he felt best expressed the true and original nature of the universal Church of Christ.

The form and content of the liturgy should present a complete and well organized summary of the Christian faith. As the liturgical year is unfolded, God's eternal plan of salvation is seen in the progression of events in the life of Christ. And continually the worshiper is reminded of the requirements of the Christian way.

Continually, too, the occurrences of the Christian year bind the present day worshiper with those times in the early Christian community when the events were actually taking place.

The liturgy comes to the church today, as it has come to every generation, as a gift from the past. It is the essence of the Christian faith which must be proclaimed now and in generations to come. It binds Christians of all times into a common body and unites them in faith in Christ. This is the power of the historic liturgy.

In order to truly get caught up in the mystery and meaning of worship, a congregation must have some understanding of the history of the liturgy. This means that individual congregations must take it upon themselves to study and to analyze the formation and the practice of liturgical worship through the ages. In concluding this chapter, the words of Luther Reed help to show the importance of true liturgical worship.

The liturgy represents the objective, the universal, and the eternal rather than the individualistic and the temporal. It has, however, great value for the individual worshiper. It gives his personal and disarranged thoughts adequate expression in forms richer and more satisfying than he himself could likely fashion. It unites him in spiritual intimacy and endeavor with his fellow believers in the awesome, yet warmly spiritual experience of communion with almighty God. This power of incorporation and unification is one of its greatest functions. More fully than any other instrument the church possesses, the liturgy promotes general church consciousness and appreciation of the church as 'the communion of saints.' It makes the individual worshiper conscious of his fellow worshipers and of his part and place in the Christian community. It lifts the congregation above parochial and local needs to an understanding of the whole church with all its needs and work. It brings the church of today into conscious fellowship with our Lord, with the prophets and apostles, the confessors and martyrs of old. It lifts the church Militant on

earth in confident faith and hope into spiritual communion with the Church triumphant, with the saints in heaven, and with Christ himself, our heavenly King.²⁷

²⁷Luther Reed, The Lutheran Liturgy (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1947), p. 23.

CHAPTER III

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FACTORS INFLUENCING

WESLEY'S CONCEPT OF WORSHIP

As John Wesley developed the Sunday Service for use by Methodist societies, he claimed that his was "a liturgy little differing from that of the Church of England."¹ To his dying day, Wesley felt that he had remained a loyal high churchman of the Church of England. If an individual were to examine just the liturgy as set forth by Wesley to his preachers, he might be inclined to agree with this, for Wesley knew the importance of order and form in the worship of God.

Yet, as this author studied the practices of Wesley as he led congregations in worship, another aspect of Wesley's thought became evident; and Wesley, the evangelist, was seen. Horton Davies states it this way: "The essence of Methodist worship as it germinated in the fertile mind of Wesley was the combination of the advantages of liturgical forms and of free prayers."² Later Davies states: "A mystic in his belief in Christian perfection, yet an evangelist

¹From John Wesley, "Sunday Service for Methodists of North America and other occasional Services" as listed in R. J. Cooke, History of the Ritual of the Methodist Episcopal Church (Cincinnati: Jennings and Pye, 1900), p. 177.

²Horton Davies, Worship and Theology in England 1690-1965 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961-1965), I, 184.

with a burning heart for England's unclaimed millions; a pietist and advocate of warm personal religion, yet an activist and disciplinarian; an outstanding preacher, Wesley was also a pre-eminent administrator and organizer."³ Wesley, with the blood of a high-churchman, almost against his very will, was the founder of one of the largest dissenting denominations in England.

This chapter will present three factors which were of major significance in influencing Wesley's ideas about worship: (1) the liturgical structure of the Book of Common Prayer, and the non-liturgical emphasis of (2) the Moravians and (3) the Puritans. On the one hand Wesley could make the statement, "I believe there is no liturgy in the world, either in ancient or modern language, which breathes more of a solid, Scriptural, rational piety than the Common Prayer of the Church of England."⁴ While, on the other hand, Wesley found great meaning in using congregational singing, extemporaneous prayer, and a freedom in worship previously unknown.⁵ The remainder of this chapter will be spent examining these influences upon the thought of Wesley.

³Ibid.

⁴See footnote 1.

⁵From an article by Nolan Harmon, "Methodist Worship: Practice and Ideals." William Anderson (ed) Methodism (Cincinnati: Methodist Publishing House, 1947), p. 232.

I. INFLUENCE OF COMMON PRAYER LITURGY

Certainly the greatest factor influencing the life and thought of John Wesley was the religion and worship of the Church of England. The training he received while attending Oxford was a reinforcing agent to all that his father had taught him at Epworth.⁶ While at Oxford, he became a member of the "Holy Club" which spent many hours in study, prayer, and devotion. During this period in Wesley's life, he formulated many of his thoughts concerning the liturgy. The members held a great respect for the Church of England and especially for its Book of Common Prayer. Also, it seems that Wesley's concern for "Spiritual holiness" came as a result of his experience in the Holy Club and was heightened as a result of a evangelical conversion.⁷

One importance of the Prayer Book is that its writers were attempting a middle-ground liturgy, between the newly reformed liturgies and the traditional Roman Mass. Just how far Cranmer wanted to go in breaking with the Roman Mass is not known. The probability is that from his wide acquaintance with all kinds of liturgies and rites, he developed the liturgy known as "Common Prayer." As any writer compiles truths from many sources into one integral work, Cranmer

⁶Davies, op. cit., I, 186.

⁷Ibid., I, 187.

brought together the works of many men and ages.⁸ As a result, the Prayer Book "incorporates both the Roman conception of worship as the sacrificial offering of corporate prayer and praise to God and the Reformation conception of God's word."⁹

Bard Thompson, in his book Liturgies of the Western Church, listed five main sources from which Cranmer collected his data.

His list includes:

- (1) The Great Bible from which the Psalms and Lessons were taken.
- (2) The Latin Rite according to the Use of the Sarum. The use of the Sarum contributed both to the structure of the liturgy and to the text itself through the course of translation and adaption.
- (3) The Orthodox Liturgy contributed some few elements (including the "Prayer of St. Chrysostum" in the Litany), the most important of which was the Invocation and the Prayer of Consecration.
- (4) The Antididagma of Cologne.
- (5) The Order of Communion was taken boldly into this new liturgy, the prayers being given exactly the position they had before. The Lutheran influence upon the Prayer Book came largely through this avenue.¹⁰

Wesley was aware of the thoroughness with which Cranmer and his associates had studied the past in an effort to create a liturgy which could enable man to best express his faith.

Until the Prayer Book appeared, there was not a book which

⁸Nolan B. Harmon, The Rites and Ritual of Episcopal Methodism (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1926), p. 25.

⁹Davies, op. cit., I, 48.

¹⁰Bard Thompson, Liturgies of the Western Church (Cleveland: World, 1965), pp. 232-234.

contained the entire service of the Mass.¹¹ Because of this fact, the service books of the Church were in the utmost confusion. The Canon of the Mass was in one book and the Introit and Post-communion in another. The "Missal" was the Mass Book for the various days in the year. It was from the Sarum Missal that most of the Collects, Epistles, and Gospel readings for the Anglican liturgy came.

There were several important factors in the development of the liturgy which resulted from the work of the English reformers. They used the models which already existed as their guide, though the service which they initiated was simpler in ceremony than was their Catholic predecessor.¹² They sought to rid the Mass, which they called Communion, of all the elements which were not scripturally based. The English reformers gave a position of honor to the Bible as the Word of God. Much of the liturgy contained direct quotes from scripture.

The English Reformers had at their disposal many possible liturgies. Their task was to take what they felt to be the most meaningful out of each and to combine this into a significant whole. Horton Davies states: "The result of the flowing together of these streams of worship was to produce a rite of great dignity, rich in historic tradition and beauty, in language that is moving."¹³ With

¹¹Harmon, op. cit., p. 20.

¹²Horton Davies, Christian Worship: Its History and Meaning (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), p. 48.

¹³Ibid., p. 49.

the services and service books of the past supplying them with a wealth of material, good, bad and indifferent, the Prayer Book was published in 1550 and remains still today as the great fundamental of the British faith.

The offertory was of great distress to Crammer. Like Luther he believed that any form of offertory 'stank of oblation.'¹⁴ In the mass the priest had the power to offer Christ's body, "for the quick and the dead," when and where he pleased. There is no mention of an offertory of bread and wine in the prayer following the sermon in 1552, as had been the case in the past. In 1552 there was no mention of the rubric which required the priest to place the bread and wine on the altar at this time.¹⁵ In place of this type of offertory, Crammer substituted a presentation of money by the people themselves, not at the altar, but at the chancel rail. This avoided any priestly oblation in connection with the money.

It was Crammer's intention that the central service within the Anglican Church should be the Holy Communion.¹⁶ In the years which followed the publishing of the Prayer Book, popular opposition and indifference caused the Communion Service to be neglected. By 1662, when the Prayer Book was revised, the failure of the laity to take

¹⁴Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy (London: Dacre Press, 1964), p. 661.

¹⁵Thompson, op. cit., p. 241.

¹⁶Neville Clark, Call To Worship (London: SCM Press, 1960), p. 37.

communion necessitated the extension of the Anti-Communion service to Sundays. By the time of Wesley the Anti-Communion Service had become the principle Sunday morning service. The great tradition of the unity of Word and Sacrament had passed away. The Communion Service became the occasional service. It was Wesley who sought to restore the tradition of weekly communion only to again have an indifferent Methodist people make it an occasional service.

How does the work of Cranmer and his associates fit into the scheme of liturgical development? Certainly it is significant that it was this liturgy which John Wesley was exposed to and grew to love. Yet the Anglican liturgy is important to Methodism and Protestantism beyond this fact. Gregory Dix states,

Compared with the clumsy and formless rites which were evolved abroad, that of 1552 is the masterpiece of an artist. Cranmer gave it a noble form as a superb piece of literature, which no one could say of its companions; but he did more. As a piece of liturgical craftsmanship it is in the first rank--once its intention is understood. It is not a disordered attempt at a catholic rite, but the only effective attempt ever made to give liturgical expression to the doctrine of 'justification by faith alone.'¹⁷

The Book of Common Prayer attempts to reconcile the external rite of the eucharist and the scriptural evidence of the Last Supper with the idea that the communicant is spiritually united with Christ.

Methodism has been blessed with the heritage of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer and it is through the understanding and study of this sound scriptural liturgy that the Church today can begin to build its liturgical framework. Wesley was well versed in the history

¹⁷Dix, op. cit., p. 672.

of the liturgy before he began to take liberties with it. Alexander Know, an intimate friend of Wesley, in later years stated:

"Not only did he (Wesley) value and love that pure spirit of faith and piety which the Church of England inherits from Catholic antiquity, but even in the more circumstantial part there was not a service or a ceremony, a gesture of habit, for which he had not an unfeigned predilection."¹⁸

II. THE MORAVIANS

Wesley's first real contact with the Moravians came on his travels to the colonies in 1735. On board ship were twenty-six Moravians, who were going to the colonies to join a party of their brethren from Herrnhut. "Wesley was exceedingly impressed with the piety, the simplicity, and the equanimity of these his shipmates."¹⁹ Because of this meeting and subsequent meetings with the Moravians, Wesley sought to learn the German language, that he might converse more freely with them.

Upon his return to England from America, Wesley met a man by the name of Peter Boehler. This man came to have a great influence on Wesley's life. Wesley was very disturbed over his seeming failure in Georgia and at this time was considering dropping out of preaching. Southey, writing in 1820, related this incident in his book on

¹⁸ Davies, Worship and Theology in England, I, 187.

¹⁹ Robert Southey, The Life of Wesley and the Rise and Progress of Methodism (London: Longman, Harst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1820), I, 78.

Wesley. "'I was clearly convinced of my unbelief,--of the want of that faith whereby we are saved,' says Wesley. A scruple immediately occurred to him, whether he ought not to leave off preaching; - for how could he preach to others who had not faith himself? Boehler was consulted whether he should leave it off, and answered, 'By no means.' 'But what can I preach?' said Wesley. The Moravian replied, 'Preach faith till you have it, and then, because you have it, you will preach it.'"²⁰ Boehler played a great part in the development of Wesley's inner life, and as time went by, became as a teacher to him.

Wesley was continually amazed at the emphasis the Moravians placed upon the "fruits of living faith."²¹ They were always so happy and seemingly complacent. Wesley knew that they possessed something special and he desired it for himself. He was unable to believe that this faith, which they talked so much about, could be given instantaneously as Boehler always maintained. Every time he had a chance, he sought to question Boehler on the subject of individual revelation. Wesley was unable to understand "How a man could at once be thus turned from darkness to light, from sin and misery to righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost."²² Yet always before him was the joyous Boehler.

²⁰Ibid. I, 155-56.

²¹Ibid., I, 158.

²²Ibid.

Wesley began to search through the Scriptures and was utterly amazed to find scarcely any instances there of other than instantaneous conversion. Then on that evening in May, at Aldersgate, Wesley reports, "About a quarter before nine, while he (the speaker who was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to Romans) was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed; I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation: and an assurance was given me, that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."²³

Wesley had now had the experience which previously had been missing in his life. He was now able to preach faith because he knew it. "Still," says Wesley, "I felt a violent opposition and reluctance to believe; yet the Spirit of God strove with my own and the evil spirit, till, by degrees, he chased away the darkness of my unbelief. I found myself convinced, I know not how nor when, and immediately fell to intercession, I found myself at peace with God, and rejoiced in hope of loving Christ."²⁴

This "conversion" experience of Wesley, as it related to his contacts with the Moravians, had a great effect on his concept of worship. He had been raised in a formal and proper tradition where the feelings of people were denied. He had been impressed by the smoothness and continuity of Anglican worship, but his contact with

²³John Wesley, The Journal (London: Epworth Press, 1938), I, 489.

²⁴Ibid., II, 291.

the Moravians helped to clarify his vague feelings of discontent and led him to seek a deeper spiritual experience.

After this, his concept of worship became less staid and conservative. For instance, in his preaching, he was able to speak strong words, and his "heart was so enlarged to declare the love of God, that it did not surprise him to be informed he was not to preach again in those churches where he had given this free utterance to the fullness of his feelings."²⁵ After his experience at Aldersgate, he was willing to go into the fields to proclaim God's Word to the miners and to the poverty-stricken. Prior to this Wesley had felt so restricted by the liturgy that the formal liturgical setting within a sanctuary was the only place he had felt proper for worship. Now the world became his parish.

The Moravians also gave to Wesley an excitement and a sense of vibrancy about his faith. Wesley proclaimed this new found faith to all he met. From the Moravians, he learned that faith expresses itself in the spirit of meekness and love. He was excited to see Christian principles being put into practice and joyously lived. He wrote to his brother Samuel, while he was visiting the Moravian community of Marienborn in Germany, these words, "God has given, at length, the desire of my heart. I am with a church whose conversation is in Heaven, in whom is the mind that was in Christ and who so

²⁵Southey, op. cit., I, 161.

walks as he walked. As they have all one Lord and one faith, so they are all partakers of one spirit, the spirit of meekness and love, which uniformly and continually animates all their conversation. Oh! how high and holy this thing Christianity is!"²⁶ In the life of the Moravians, Wesley found an authentic desire to reach out in love to their fellow men. Their example led Wesley to instill within the worship service an emphasis on offering oneself in devotion to the Word. The dedication of the self in service had not been a part of the Anglican liturgy.

The Moravians were also influential in helping Wesley discover the meaning of experimental religion.²⁷ Religion for them was an expression of an individual's faith in God, which could be expressed in a number of ways and in a variety of places. Wesley enlarged upon two of the Moravian services which have played an important role within the Methodist tradition. The two services which Wesley used were the Love Feast and the Watchnight Service. Both of these services were experiential, in that the congregation through song, conversing, and sharing of religious experiences, became the body of Christ. There was no set ritual or liturgy to follow, but the service progressed as the spirit moved individuals. I am sure this type of activity recalled to him his days in the Holy Club, though the Moravians did this regularly as a worshipping community. Wesley saw a great need

²⁶ Ibid., I, 195.

²⁷ Davies, Worship and Theology in England, I, p. 192.

and a real potential for this type of activity within the Methodist societies.

Methodism owes a great debt of gratitude to the Moravians, for, through the Moravian influence, Methodism was blessed with a vitality it might not have known otherwise. Wesley returned from his visit to the Moravian headquarters in Herrnhut confirmed in his new religious experience.²⁸ As time went by, Wesley began to apply this life in the spirit to all that he did. It influenced his theology. Also, it prompted him to structure the Methodist societies on the Moravian principle that religious living would not be a burden to the people but a challenge to go on to perfection. Wesley learned to so challenge men to this spiritual life that they were unable to see any alternative but to accept it. In this sense, the Moravians gave to Methodism its revivalist spirit.

III. THE PURITANS

A final factor influencing Wesleyan thought and Methodist worship is that of the Puritan tradition. The aim of this group of people was to model the English liturgy according to the pure Word of God.²⁹ The Puritans believed in the sole sufficiency of the Bible. Only the Bible could be taken as a guide for life and faith. The biblical word, according to them if strictly adhered to, provided an

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid., I, p. 197.

adequate criterion for all problems. It was from that point that all talk of worship began. Their services were completely based upon the letter of Word as found in the Bible. For worship to be authentic, they felt there must be an exact correlation between worship and Scripture. Wesley was very concerned with making the liturgy scriptural, and many times placed verbatim sections of the Bible within the liturgy.

In many ways, the Puritans were the predecessors of the Methodists; yet because of the differences between the two traditions, especially over predestination, the two have never been considered compatible. Nolan Harmon states,

"The fact that Puritanism was inseparably connected with Calvinism, and that early Methodists both in England and America had a long and bitter struggle with the iron-clad Predestination, has somewhat obscured the other fact, that after all, in more ways than one, the Puritans were the fore-runners of Methodism-outwardly at least. They bore the civil and social brunt of non-conformity, and in their long warfare with the High-Church episcopacy wrung concessions from the Establishment under which many of the people called Methodists were glad to take refuge when they came along."³⁰

The Prayer Book of 1661, which remains nearly intact today, is the result of a thorough going evangelization by the Puritans.³¹

Puritanism really began as a protest movement against the Prayer Book. They sought to purify completely the Church of England from Papal errors, and although the ground they laid may seem in many ways

³⁰ Harmon, op. cit., p. 31.

³¹ Ibid., p. 30.

small and insignificant, they were beneficial in helping make clear many of the essentials of worship which at a later date became a part of Methodist worship. At the Savoy Conference in 1661, called by King Charles II, the Presbyterian (Puritan) leaders who attended the meeting presented the Bishops of the Church of England with a list of seventeen "exceptions" in writing.³²

Although most of these changes never were put into the Prayer Book, they made an impact on Wesley. Cooke, in his book, History of Ritual, states,

"It will be observed that had these concessions and demands been accepted and agreed to, the Church of England would have become in many respects what the Methodist Episcopal Church is now in polity and worship. What these Presbyterians (Puritan) conceded concerning Episcopacy, Wesley put into practice; and what they conceded relative to Liturgy and ceremonial, and demanded concerning revision of the Prayer-Book, which, it is understood, contained also the Ritual for Ordinations and other occasions, Wesley carried out when providing the Church in America with a suitable form for Sunday Service and for the decent celebration of sacred rites."³³

Wesley was aware of the shortcomings within the Anglican liturgy, and the corrective measures suggested by the Puritans were his guide, especially where the Puritans sought to restore the elements of obedience and edification. Davies states, "Puritanism is an ethos integrating a profound loyalty to God with all the spheres of human exist-

³²Francis Procter and Walter Frere, A New History of the Book of Common Prayer (London: Macmillan, 1920), p. 172-175.

³³Cooke, op. cit., p. 151.

ence- man's whole being is in obedience to God."³⁴ The Puritans were very sober and serious about life, almost to the point of arrogance. This was by no means "lack of humility," but stemmed from a conception of life as based on obedience. They expressed their faith in terms of Covenants rather than Creeds, and in terms of declaration of loyalty to Christ rather than on intellectual affirmations. Religion to them meant something which was to be practiced and lived. Wesley identified with this kind of religious life. Along with this concept of obedience, Wesley caught from the Puritans, as from the Moravians, a sense of real warmth. He was greatly impressed by their sense of intimate fellowship with each other.

Spontaneity, which is a somewhat lost art in worship today, was an important feature in the Puritan tradition. Wesley fought with his background to make it a part of his worship. In 1757, Wesley made the statement that he felt extempore prayers were alright only for private meetings.³⁵ Later he felt confined and states, "Neither do I purpose to be confined to them any more, but pray indifferently, with a form or without, as I may find suitable to particular occasions."³⁶ Here the high churchman Wesley saw the need for the working of the Holy Spirit within a liturgical setting. He realized that both the set

³⁴Horton Davies, The English Free Churches (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 6.

³⁵Davies, Worship and Theology in England, I, 193.

³⁶Ibid.

and free prayers had their advantages, the former for unity and catholicity and the latter for simplicity and spontaneity. Worship must have order, but must leave room for God acting in and through the worshiper.

Puritanism was a forerunner of the Methodist tradition. It helped to prepare the way, for it gave to Methodism its need to remain practical and down to earth. What happened in Roman Catholicism happened in turn to the Church of England. Worship became not an act for participation by the masses; but rites to be carried out by the priest. Quality in worship was perfection in performance. To this the Puritans said no. Quality in worship is measured through the application of ordered principles in daily living. Wesley was able to grasp this and to use it effectively; and, as a result, its influence was deeply felt in the development of Methodist beliefs.

IV. CONCLUSION

In the opinion of this writer, all of the previously mentioned factors were important in the development of Wesley's thought on the place and perspective of worship in the life of the church. It can never be denied that Wesley always remained a High Churchman in the sense that he was not provincial or sectarian, but that he walked in the main highway of Christianity.³⁷ With his instruction in the liturgy of the Church of England, there can be little doubt that this

³⁷ J. Ernest Rattenbury, The Conversion of the Wesleys (London: Epworth Press, 1938), p. 172.

was the model he used when developing a liturgy for the people called Methodists. He knew the importance of remaining within the liturgy of the historical church.

By making this statement, it does not mean that Wesley was not influenced by his evangelical brethren. His acquaintance with and knowledge of the Moravian and Puritan movements were very influential in his thinking. His solid Anglican training and attachment were set afire by his spiritual conversion. When an individual examines the "Sunday Service" as developed by John Wesley, he is aware that the structure is derived from the tradition of the Church of England; yet an individual must be conscious of the freedom from form and ceremonies expressed by Wesley at certain times. "God is Spirit, and they that worship him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." For Wesley, the Anglican liturgy was not the only means through which the Spirit moved. In fact, many times he felt it to be a hindrance. He saw the power of congregational singing and extemporaneous prayer as these related to the freeing of the Spirit to become active in the worship service. The openness and sincerity of the Puritans impressed Wesley. He sought to examine how these might fit into his religious understanding of the Christian faith.

Wesley continually reminded his people to attend the service of the Anglican Church, at least once a week. This shows that Wesley did not regard his societies' evangelical and fellowship services as substitutes for, but as supplemental to the ordered public worship of the Church of England. Yet, this shows those writers who feel Wesley

was always a strict high churchman in worship that he was aware of the need and necessity for free worship experiences. Wesley's concept of worship was based to a great extent upon the situation in which he found himself. Bard Thompson states: "In his entire view of worship Wesley drew the balance between the stability of tradition and the dynamism of the Spirit, and he knew no conflict between the evangelical reality and the sacramental reality of the Christian experience."³⁸ Wesley out of his exposure to both formal and evangelical worship, was able to create a worship service which allowed the individual worshiper to experience God. He knew that, if certain basic elements were present, men could be brought into the reality of a life in Christ. The potential of Wesleyan worship lies in its ability to stimulate men to come into the presence of God, not in whether the worship service is traditional or free. Much emphasis should be placed on taking the genius of Wesley and seeing how it applies today. To be meaningful and relevant does not mean that what has come before must be tossed aside, for too long has the Church been caught in the trap of trying to speak to the people without first having received the inspiration of God. God is the subject of worship with the people being the object of God's love. Men must come to worship by approaching God in sincerity and in reality, through the power invested in the liturgy by Christ Jesus, not by creating a new liturgy which is based entirely on contemporary thinking. For most

³⁸Thompson, op. cit., p. 414.

people, this would mean a spiritual conversion must take place. They come to worship unable to experience God because they are unable to become released from the spiritual anxieties which control their lives. They come to worship with a lack of knowledge as to the reason for their coming. Worship for them has come to be more a traditional observance rather than truly religious experience capable of transforming their lives.

Wesley's conversion was such a liberating experience for him from the spiritual anxieties which before had been depressing to him, that he was able to march forth with new strength, as a witness for Christ.³⁹ It caused him to preach to the end of his life the truth which he had experienced. This experience did not mean that he turned his back on his Anglican training, but he now saw these teachings in a new perspective.

These, then, were the three main influences which controlled Wesley in the eighteenth century. Instructed in the liturgy of the Church of England, it was this liturgy which formed the basis of his thinking. Schooled in Bible and history, Wesley was well aware of the past and the richness it held and tried to combine the "solid and scriptural" dimensions of the Church of England with the congregational singing, extemporaneous prayer, and freedom in worship of the Free Church. Saved himself, through faith, John Wesley sought to develop

³⁹Rattenbury, op. cit., p. 169.

within the consciousness of each worshiper a sense of the reality of God - this reality to become a way of life.

CHAPTER IV

FROM A PERSPECTIVE OF WESLEY'S CONCEPT OF WORSHIP

John Wesley's thinking was thoroughly systematic in the sense of being logical and coherent; and while he dealt in detail with only a limited number of doctrines,... it must be observed that he had a perfect genius for putting his finger on what was- and is- vital and essential, so that all his preaching and teaching revolved around one unmistakeable centre: the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ and imparted to men by the Holy Spirit.¹

These words of Philip Watson capture the essence of the spirit in which Wesley developed his concept of worship. In a systematic way, Wesley sought to balance the stability of tradition with the dynamics of the Spirit. Through the liturgy, he felt man must be able to come into the presence of God and be able to feel the redeeming power of God's love.

Wesley developed within his own thinking the feeling that certain factors helped to bring man into an awareness of God's presence; knowable dimensions which, if a part of the worship experience would better enable the worshiper to commune with God. Somewhat theoretically and somewhat empirically, Wesley developed a liturgical framework which became the basis of the Wesleyan worship service. This chapter will focus on that liturgical framework. For Wesley, worship was always considered in the context of a God-man encounter.

¹Philip Watson (comp.), The Message of the Wesleys (New York: Macmillan, 1964), p. 111.

I. ESSENTIALS OF WORSHIP

John Wesley prepared a liturgy differing little from that of the Church of England, which he advised all his traveling preachers to use. It was brought to the United States in 1784 by the newly ordained Superintendent, Thomas Coke. It was based on a framework developed with respect to people already being accustomed to the usages and Rites of the Church of England.² Wesley, in preparing this liturgy, was certainly not trying to make dead ritualists out of Methodists; but was seeking to direct and guide persons in the Christian life. It can never be denied that Wesley was ever a high churchman; but along with this sense of order and formality he added scriptural and rational elements to the liturgy.

Order and discipline. There was one role which Wesley felt that each member of the Methodist societies should follow. Each week every member should 'be at Church and at the Lord's Table.'³ He felt that within the ordered structure of the Anglican Communion an individual would experience the spiritual presence of Christ. Throughout his life he never was able to disassociate the presence of Christ from the disciplined Common Prayer. Wesley had this to say to those

²Nolan B. Harmon, The Rites and Rituals of Episcopal Methodism (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1926), p. 39.

³John Bishop, Methodist Worship in Relation to Free Church Worship (London: Epworth Press, 1950), p. 78.

ministers who sought to equate the Methodist worship with 'true worship'.

Many of them said, 'Our own service is public worship.' Wesley argued that in a sense it was, but that it presupposes public prayer, like the sermons at the university. He states, 'If it were designed to be instead of Church service, it would be essentially defective, for it seldom has the four grand parts of public prayer; depreciation, petition, intercession, and thanksgiving.' He ends by advising all the Methodists in England and Ireland who have been brought up in the Church, constantly to attend the service of worship of the Church, at least once a week.⁴

The services Wesley set up in the societies, which were by nature evangelistic and based on fellowship, were not to take the place of the Anglican service; but were supplemental to the public worship.⁵ His advice to the ministers in America was to follow as closely as possible the example of the Anglican Liturgy.

In a letter to the Rev. Samuel Walker in 1755, Wesley admonishes those ministers who advocated separation from the Established Church. The ministers had felt that Wesley relied too heavily upon the Book of Common Prayer; it had seemed to them as though Wesley worshiped the liturgy rather than the liturgy having led him in the worship of God. They listed three reasons why they felt they ought not use the Common Prayer:

⁴Ibid., p. 83.

⁵Ibid.

1. Though the Liturgy is, in general, possessed of rare excellence, it is both absurd and sinful to declare such an assent and consent, to any human composition, as is required to it.
2. Though they did not object to the use of forms, they durst not confine themselves to them.
3. Because they considered the decretals of the Church as the very drug of popery, and many of the canons as grossly wicked and absurd. The spirit which they breathe is throughout popish and unchristian.⁶

To this challenge Wesley replied:

Those ministers who truly feared God near a hundred years ago had undoubtedly much the same objections to the liturgy which some (who never read their Works) have now. And I myself so far allow the force of several of those objections that I should not dare to declare my assent and consent to that book in the terms prescribed. Indeed, they are so strong that I think they cannot safely be used with regard to any book but the Bible. Neither dare I confine myself wholly to forms of prayer, not even in the church. I use, indeed, all the forms; but frequently add extemporary prayer before or after the sermon.⁷

Wesley was not so much interested in the liturgy being followed to the letter as he was in maintaining an order within worship. He always felt a need to maintain a basic structure and to build worship upon that structure, rather than to leave the entire service open to the 'work of the Spirit'.

He was aware of the need for freedom within worship, but he was also aware of the danger of numerous emotional outbursts. He incorporated the hymns of his brother Charles into worship services, but

⁶L. Tyerman, The Life and Times of John Wesley (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1890), II, 208.

⁷John Wesley, The Letters (London: Epworth Press, 1931), III, 152.

not without establishing them on the solid foundation of Christian tradition and discipline.⁸ In one of his sermons Wesley writes:

Many of the Reformers themselves complained that the Reformation was not carried far enough. But what do they mean? Why, that they did not sufficiently reform the rites and ceremonies of the Church. Ye fools and blind, to fix your whole attention on the circumstantialia of religion. Your complaint ought to have been, the essentials of religion were not carried far enough. You ought to vehemently insist on the entire change of men's temper and lives. Without this how exquisitely trifling was the reformation of opinions and rites and ceremonies.⁹

Wesley was impatient with people who protested against ceremony and he probably would be more impatient with people who made it of central importance in religion. Rituals were the 'circumstantialia' of the societies whose services were supplementary to the services of the Established Church, and he made it plain that he did not wish them to be substituted for the liturgical and sacramental worship and the ordered discipline of the Catholic Church.

Scripture. The Wesleyan liturgy is based upon scripture. Some ninety-five per cent of it comes directly from the Bible.¹⁰ The

⁸ J. Ernest Rattenbury, The Conversion of the Wesleys (London: Epworth Press, 1938), pp. 206-210.

⁹ Ibid., p. 224.

¹⁰ The Wesley Order of Common Prayer, (Nashville: Board of Education of the Methodist Church, 1957), p. 8. Compare the General Confession with the following scriptural texts: Isa 53:6, Psa 119:176, I Pet. 2:25, Prov 19:21, Jer 18:12, II Chron 28:13, Matt 23:23, Psa 38:3, Luke 18:13, Psa 51:1, Neh 13:22, Psa 51:12, Rom 15:8, I John 2:12, Titus 2:11-12, John 14:13.

opening of the service in the reading of sentences of scripture; the Lord's prayer is from Matthew; the versicles can be found in the Psalms; the Venite is the combining of Psalms 95 and 96; the Psalter is taken from the Psalms; the reading of the Old and New Testaments; the Benedictus is from Luke 1; and the final grace is from one of Paul's letters.¹¹ Therefore, an individual can conclude that Wesley was concerned that the design and purpose of the worship service should be thoroughly rooted in the Word. Wesley exposed some of his own prejudice toward the presence of scripture in worship when at a Conference in 1786 he stated, "We advise everyone who preaches in the Church hours, to read the psalms and lessons, with part of the Church prayers; because, we apprehend, this will endear the church service to our brethren who probably would be prejudiced against it, if they heard none but extemporary prayer."¹²

Reason. John Wesley was truly a man of God, and a man who knew how to lead others to a knowledge of God. This he embodied in a systematic and logical approach to religious living. Wesley had a way of taking an idea and developing this idea systematically so that all who heard it were certain of his position. His preaching was a reflection of this. He would single out an individual or individuals in a gathering and preach directly at them until he felt

¹¹Ibid., p. 9

¹²Tyerman, op. cit., III, 478.

that what he was saying was crystal clear. The rationality of Wesley's worship conformed to the very foundation of the Christian faith, in that it systematically displayed the Christian's relationship to his God in accordance with the Christian understanding of that relationship.¹³

As he developed his understanding of worship, Wesley sought to eliminate any element which he felt to be redundant or harmful. The method which he used was to take a copy of the English Prayer Book and, with pen in hand, to mark out all those words, phrases, or sentences which for him weren't congruent or in continuity with the remainder of the service. He did this with the intent that the service would flow in a methodical fashion so that all might follow and participate.

Wesley developed a liturgy based upon a three-fold arrangement of the service. The different elements are marked by versicles so that it is easy for the congregation to tell when one part ends and the next begins. Wesley wanted to be sure that everyone who participated in the service could follow the order. The three portions of the service are: (1) penitence and confession of our sin; (2) the proclamation of God's Word through song, creed, and sermon; and (3) the offering of one's self. These will be discussed more at length in the next section, but I mention them here to point the sequential structure of Wesley's worship service. It is not an accidental logic,

¹³Wesley Order of Common Prayer.

for his service follows the course of every Christian's relationship to God.¹⁴ The service is an interpretation of the fulfillment that is possible for each man. In other words, man does not just worship to be worshiping, but he does it for a particular reason. He seeks to discover in worship who he is, what he is, and what unique and creative potential he has to contribute to the work of the Lord.

II. STRUCTURE OF WORSHIP

Words get overlaid by habit, becoming buried under the weight of custom or tradition. Sometimes an entirely fresh context is needed before the message shines clearly again. This problem of how to express an old faith in contemporary terms is one that every century has to solve for itself. Only too often, unfortunately, people confuse the traditional form with the spirit that animates it.¹⁵

These words express what Wesley must have felt as he sought to pattern a worship service. He was aware of his historical heritage, yet he seemed to understand his task in light of the then present needs of his people. He advocated not just a spiritual worship, but a worship which was practical and applicable to life itself. Once preaching from the Sermon on the Mount, Wesley had this to say concerning spiritual worship:

Then I would ask, What is it to worship God, a Spirit, in spirit and truth? Why, it is to worship Him with our spirit, to worship Him in that manner which none but spirits are capable of. It is to believe Him, as a wise, just, holy, Being; of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; and yet merciful, gracious, and

¹⁴Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁵From the jacket of the "Twentieth Century Folk Mass" record.

long suffering; forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; casting all our sins behind His back, and accepting us in the Beloved. It is, to love Him, to delight in Him, with all our hearts, and mind, and soul, and strength; to imitate Him we love, by purifying ourselves even as He is pure; and to obey Him when we love, and in whom we believe, both in thought, and word, and work.

Consequently, one branch of the worshipping of God in spirit and in truth is, the keeping His outward commandments. To glorify Him, therefore, with our bodies as well as our spirits; to go through outward work with hearts lifted up to Him; to make our daily employment a sacrifice to God; to buy and sell, to eat and drink, to His glory, - this is worshipping God in spirit and truth, as much as the praying to Him in the wilderness.¹⁶

Within his liturgy, Wesley included the elements of confession, proclamation, and offering. All the great Christian liturgies follow this basic structure.¹⁷ Wesley entitled the three sections of the service; the Service of Confession, the Service of the Word, and the Service of Offering.

The service opens on a fearful note with the reading of scriptural sentences. After these have been read, the minister explains that the Scripture moves us to confess to God. At this point, the worshipers fall down on their knees and confess their sins before almighty God in unison. "In the face of this knowledge that I am a sinner, I can do no other than fall on my knees and confess myself to be indeed that which I have been shown to be - a sinner before God and man. Without this acknowledgement, I am only an imposter

¹⁶ John Wesley, Wesley's Standard Sermons (London: Epworth Press, 1961), I, 292 - 93.

¹⁷ Wesley Order of Common Prayer, p. 12.

when I try to stand before God and worship him."¹⁸ As man becomes naked before God, the minister pronounces the words of absolution freeing man to pray the words of Jesus. Man is able to rise up freely forgiven of his past.

Because of the forgiving nature of God, man is compelled to praise God and to give thanks to Him for all the many benefits he has been given. Standing, man sings God's Word proclaimed through song, creed and scripture. Freed from his past, the worshiper is able to respond to this new possibility of life in the present. Man now has the possibility and the responsibility to join in a new life in Jesus Christ. The newly created beings join in becoming the community of Christ.

This new life in Christ is the genesis of the Service of Offering. The worshiper goes forth from the sanctuary in grace, love, and fellowship. Grace having come to him in Christ, through the love of God, which has brought a knowledge of the fellowship to be found in the Holy Spirit. The future is now placed before the worshiper as a goal to be pursued - a continuing challenge to follow in the way of Christ.

This challenge must be offered again and again, for as tomorrow comes, the new man has forgotten that he can put his complete trust in God. Life returns to being based on one's own way, as one attempts to avoid the new life which was in Christ Jesus. In the

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

midst of life, man is suddenly confronted again in the worship service by a Word which declares him to be a sinner, and through forgiveness offers him a means to re-dedicate his life to God.

The three parts of the Wesleyan service are inextricably tied together. As a worshiper is confronted by his past and in turn responds penitently, he is then able to live creatively in the present as a free man, with hope for the future. This is how Wesley perceived the life of a Christian. The Christian is aware of the need to be in continuous communion with God in Christ as he seeks to bring God's kingdom here upon this earth. Wesley sought to compose this way of life and this purpose into the very fiber of the liturgy.

III. ESSENCE OF WORSHIP

There are certain theological criteria which seem to be at the basis of Wesley's thinking on the liturgy and which give Methodism a vital place in the current movement toward a Universal Church. The Wesleyan service is a unique combination of the historic liturgy and the witness of the spirit.

The great work of the reformation included the challenge that each man was a priest. What Luther stated in the sixteenth century, the Protestant Church proclaimed:

Our priest or minister stands before the altar, having been publicly called to his priestly functions. He repeated publicly and distinctly Christ's words of the institution; he takes the bread and wine and distributed it according to Christ's words; and we all kneel beside him and round him, men and women, young and old, sanctified by the blood of Christ. We are there in our priestly dignity ... We do not let the priest proclaim for him-

self the Ordinance of Christ; but he is the mouthpiece of us all, and we all say it with him in our hearts with true faith in the Lamb of God who feeds us with his body and blood.¹⁹

Wesley took this principle of the priesthood of believers and expanded it into a belief in the corporate priesthood of the whole Church.²⁰

He saw the Church not as a collection of individuals, but as a corporate priesthood united as the body of Christ. It is in the combination of the symbolic offering of Christ's body, and the Church as the body of Christ, that the real value of the priesthood is understood.

For Wesley, the true essence of worship was the expression of the corporate life of the Church. He saw in communion not the priest performing for the people, on behalf of the people; but the entire priestly community, the body of Christ, united together. Wesley realized that he was a member of a corporate priesthood; the songs, prayers, and structure of the liturgy reflect this attitude.²¹ Because of this, the Eucharist was a vital part of the early Methodist tradition. Whereas, it was almost totally neglected in the Church of England, Wesley revived it among his Methodist societies. As the people of God joined together in the Lord's Supper at the communion rail, their hearts and souls became as one, reaching out in love and

¹⁹ J. Ernest Rattenbury, The Eucharist Hymns of John and Charles Wesley (London: Epworth Press, 1948), p. 153.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., p. 152.

concern. As they shared the bread and wine at the table of the Lord, the spiritual presence of Christ united them into the body of Christ. The congregation, as a corporate priesthood, shared in each other's joys and sorrows and became the body of Christ.

Wesley presented his theology of the Lord's Supper in his sermon on "The Means of Grace." In this sermon he spoke of the grace of God. In one section, Wesley stated:

Is not the eating of that bread and the drinking of that cup the outward, and visible means whereby God conveys into our souls all that spiritual grace, that righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, which were purchased by the body of Christ once broken, and the blood of Christ once shed for us.²²

Wesley believed that through the operation of the Holy Spirit, Christ is made present in the Eucharist. Through this presence, Christ bestows his power upon true believers. For Wesley, the spiritual presence of Christ was real. This was more than symbolism; it was Christ's actual presence making possible the realization of a corporate priesthood bound together. Complete faith was not required by Wesley for participation in the Communion service. He knew through experience that the sacrament was a converting agent meant for all those who were honestly seeking to discover their faith. The end result of this sacrament was love expressed in and through the lives of those who were partakers.

²²Wesley, Wesley's Standard Sermon, I, 391.

Wesley believed that men gather at the communion table as a community to receive the gift of a new life; that as a worshipping body, the congregation re-enacts the mighty acts of redeeming love in Christ, of the Cross and Resurrection.²³ That Christ, in all His love, offers Himself to all who will receive Him. If, at this time, men are prepared to offer and present themselves, their souls, and their bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice, Christ will unite them unto Himself. Through this union with Him, they are joined together into one body. They shall rise up, united in spirit, going forth into the world to be used by God, not for their own purpose, but for the purpose of Him who came to give life abundant. Through communion together, in the name of Christ, their hearts become united in the one purpose of following in the way of Christ.

IV. WESLEY'S SUNDAY SERVICE

In a letter written by Thomas Coke there is this statement: "Because Wesley was fully conscious that he was instituting a Church in America, or at least an autonomous branch of the holy Catholic Church, Wesley gave the American body careful and specific instructions as to how it ought to carry on its worship."²⁴ These instructions were brought to America by Thomas Coke in 1784 in the form of

²³Bard Thompson, Liturgies of the Western Church (Cleveland: World, 1965), pp. 412-413.

²⁴George Hedley, "Some Factors in Worship" (Los Angeles, 1959), Address II, p. 5.

a book entitled, "The Sunday Service of the Methodist Church in North America, with Other Occasional Services."²⁵ This was the "Prayer Book" for American Methodism.

When Wesley stated that he had prepared "a liturgy little differing from that of the Church of England," he was referring to the services labeled Sunday Services which were in the book. The service which is commonly referred to today as the Sunday Morning Worship Service originally was called the Morning Prayer Service. This service made no provision for a sermon or an offering (money).²⁶ The reason for the two omissions was that Wesley had intended that communion be administered every Sunday. It was only later as the Morning Prayer became the main service of Sunday worship that the sermon and offering were added. Wesley's original intent was that this prayer book be used in a similar manner to the English Church's use of the Common Book of Prayer. Little did Wesley realize that, before the first generation had disappeared, the 'Sunday Service' would be almost totally discarded, and only the Morning Prayer would remain in use.

In general, the changes which were made by Wesley were the omission of those items which were objectionable. Certainly the

²⁵John Wesley, "The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America with other Occasional Services (London: Sept. 10, 1784) in R. J. Cooke, History of the Ritual of the Methodist Episcopal Church (Cincinnati: Jennings and Pye, 1900).

²⁶Wesley Order of Common Prayer, p. 13.

Sunday Service was an abridgement, but only in the sense that it left out material which Wesley felt to be redundant or harmful.²⁷

Some of the changes made in the Communion Service were as follows:

(1) Nicene Creed omitted; (2) Several changes in the Offertory sentences; (3) the three long Exhortations were omitted; (4) the phrase, 'the burden of them is intolerable' was left out of the General Confession; (5) the Absolution was changed into a Prayer for Pardon; (6) the Sanctus was to be sung, not said; and (7) the Second Thanksgiving was omitted.²⁸ Several other minor changes were made by Wesley.

Wesley felt that he had come up with an adequate revision and that no other corrections were necessary. He was quite disturbed when he found out that Coke had made two or three alterations. He wrote in a letter from Dublin, June 20, 1789, in regard to these alterations: "Dr. Coke made two or three alterations in the Prayer Book without my knowledge. I took particular care throughout to alter nothing for alterings sake. In religion I am for as few innovations as possible. I love the old wine best. And if it were only on this account, I prefer 'which' before 'who art in heaven.'"²⁹

In assessing this revised addition of the Prayer Book, Wesley

²⁷Harmon, op. cit., p. 43.

²⁸Tyerman, op. cit., III, 580.

²⁹Wesley, The Letters, VIII, 140.

scholars do not agree. Harmon³⁰ and Bishop³¹ believe that the Sunday Service was a Puritan revision. They are not saying that Wesley was self-consciously a Puritan or that he was seeking a complete liturgical reform, but they say this because he was the chief exponent of evangelical religion on the English scene. Cooke generally agrees with this position in his book, History of the Ritual of the Methodist Episcopal Church.³² Rattenbury takes a more practical perspective when he states that Wesley's motivations were his habitual passion for abridgement and his desire to have the liturgy acceptable in America, where the Puritan tradition was strong and there was bitterness toward the Church of England.³³ Other scholars argue that Wesley sought to fulfill the Presbyterian requests at the Savoy Conference in 1661. Basically, this author feels these scholars are putting forth the same principle - Wesley was influenced by his non-conformist Puritan heritage, his scholarship, and his deep evangelical convictions when formulating the Sunday Service. It was all of these forces in the end which helped Wesley in his thinking on the meaning and significance of the liturgy. This author feels that

³⁰Harmon, op. cit., pp. 42-43.

³¹Bishop, op. cit., pp. 87-88.

³²Cooke, op. cit., pp. 149-175.

³³Rattenbury, The Eucharistic Hymns, pp. 150-157.

there were a great many forces at work within Wesley as he sought to develop a meaningful liturgy.

With the writing and publishing of "The Sunday Service," Methodism was officially born. Up until this point, Wesley still considered the Methodist societies to be related to the Mother Church. As he worked on the Sunday Service, he must have finally seen that in the end a new structure would be born. It must not have been an easy or quick decision which led Wesley to develop the Sunday Service, for his whole life had been steeped in the Anglican Church was not able to move in the manner which he felt that it must. However, to his dying day, Wesley was unable to think of himself in any other terms than a priest in the Church of England.

IV. CONCLUSION

In general, Wesley's idea of religion, though exalted, was very simple and uncomplicated. To him Christianity was a religion of love, joy, and peace, having its seat in the inner-most soul, of man.³⁴ Wesley once stated, "I am sick of opinions. I am very weary to bear them. Give me solid and substantial religion. Give me a humble, gentle, lover of God and man; a man full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy; a man laying himself out in the work of faith, the patience of hope, the labor of

³⁴Harmon, op. cit., p. 37.

love."³⁵ To the end that men could live in this kind of harmony, Wesley sought to make the liturgy speaks.

Methodists have neglected the "Sunday Service" of Wesley throughout their history. Before 1800 had arrived, the Wesleyan service was almost totally ignored. There have been attempts to restore the Wesleyan service to its rightful place, but most of these attempts have failed because Methodist congregations have found the language meaningless. As a result, the "Sunday Service" has never found a prominent position in Methodist worship.

After studying the thought of Wesley on the subject of the liturgy, this author is concerned about our Methodist worship today. A more detailed account of contemporary Methodist worship will be given in Chapter VI, but at this point it is important to regard Wesley's opinions as they relate to Methodisms liturgical history. Wesley certainly would be in favor of the liturgy being meaningful within the present-day context, but not to the point that the meaningful purpose of the liturgy is obscured. And preaching service on contemporary problems with the other acts of worship as window dressing would not, in the Wesleyan tradition, fulfill the requirement for meaningful worship in the Church of Jesus Christ.

Wesley was flexible in structuring his worship service depending upon the situation in which he found himself. The worship service

³⁵Ibid., p. 39.

in the field was very different from the worship in the city chapel. Yet, each of these services had the same basic structure. Worship was always seen in the light of man seeking to understand his existence as it related to a life in Christ. Methodists need not feel guilty for not copying exactly the "Sunday Service" of Wesley, but they should feel guilty about their sometimes all too apparent lack of appreciation for Wesley's understanding of the meaning of worship.

Methodist worship ought to be the worship of God in Jesus Christ with the congregation sharing fully in its power and potential. For this to happen, each congregation must be aware of what it is that enables men to experience God. Because Wesley was fully aware that he was instituting a Church in America, or at least an autonomous branch of the Church of England, he gave the American body careful and specific instructions as to how they ought to carry on in worship.³⁶ Wesley wanted to make sure that the new Church was aware of the nature of significant worship. He would have been quite disturbed to see what actually happened only a few years after his death.

This does not mean that worship must be set or confined to certain forms. Too often, the excuse given is that to be a Wesleyan meant that an individual must adhere to certain principles. Essentially to be a son of Wesley, means to advocate that the worshiper be challenged in the liturgy to throw off the sinfulness of the past

³⁶Cooke, op. cit., pp. 166-168. Cooke lists the instructions as given by Wesley to Coke.

and to seek in the future to follow after the way of Christ.

It was not the genius of Methodism to be confined to forms. With Christian art and ceremonial as such. Methodism can have no conflict. To her thought there would be nothing incongruous in holding a 'revival' service in the dome of St. Peter's, in the aisles of Cologne, or under the spires of Milan, in which the joyful shouts of new-born souls and the sobbings of the penitent would take the place of swelling organ and Gregorian chant... But Methodism, born of the Spirit, must live in the freedom of the Spirit. Where the Spirit of God is, there is the life of God; and that life can neither be restrained nor cramped by artificial and superfluous forms without the destruction of those forms or the gradual decline and final extinction of that Divine life, the manifest presence of which is the only true standard of a standing or falling Church.³⁷

To have form in worship does not always mean that the service must be plagued with spiritless formalism. Too often people feel that one can not be experienced without the other. The genius of Wesley was that he was able to take much of the formalism and meaninglessness of the liturgy of the Church of England and to replace it with liturgical forms which led the worshipers to a free spiritual life. The form of the liturgy is a means by which the worshiper is able to come face to face in a confrontation with God. This was the concern of Wesley as he sought to give to the people called Methodists a relevant liturgical form.

In conclusion of this section, the words of Wesley to a friend concerning worship are important:

All true worship to God is offered in the onward and immediate moving of His own Spirit. We ought not to pray or preach where and when we will, but where and when we are moved thereto by His Spirit. All other worship, both praises, prayers, and preachings,

³⁷Ibid., pp. 171-172.

which man sets about in his own will, and at his own appointment, which he can begin and end at pleasure, do or leave undone, as himself see meet, are but superstitions and will worship ... It is equally true that we ought to pray and preach only where and when we are moved by the Spirit. But you do not understand what it means to be moved by the Spirit. God moves man according to the reason which He has given him ... Accordingly you are as really 'moved by the Spirit' when He convinces you ought to feed him that is hungry, as when He gives you ever so strong an impulse, desire, or inclination to do so.³⁸

³⁸ Wesley, The Letters, IV, 279.

CHAPTER V

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF METHODISM'S LITURGICAL TRADITION

Article twenty-two of the Methodist Articles of Religion explains: "Every particular Church may ordain, change, or abolish Rites and ceremonies, so that all things may be done to edification."¹ Throughout Methodism's history, this has been true in thought and practice. The feeling has been that the method and style of worship in one generation is not binding upon any other generation. In Methodist history, neither the "Sunday Service" nor the Ritual has ever been considered greater than the standard doctrines of the church.²

Yet the forms of the ritual have played a great part in the shaping of religious services in Methodism. Few people read theological doctrines, but most people worship regularly. At times the liturgy has been taken as the doctrine of the church. Because of this, Methodists have had to be careful that they do not misuse the privilege of "changing or abolishing" the liturgy. They have had to watch when working with the liturgy that they have not destroyed any

¹ Henry Wheeler, History and Exposition of the Twenty-Five Articles of Religion of the Methodist Episcopal Church (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1908), pp. 357-364.

² Nolan Harmon, The Rites and Ritual of Episcopal Methodism (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1926), p. 65.

of its meaning, especially in relation to the Lord's Supper.³

Therefore, certain principles have been maintained within Methodism to insure that the essential nature of worship is kept.

Nolan Harmon lists these principles as:

1. It must contain nothing which violates the Articles or the formal Standards of Doctrine of the Church in which it adheres. If it should, there would be manifest contradiction, and the expression or form so offending would be at once cast out, since the outward form must always express the inward belief.
2. Liturgies and Rituals must not only conform to fixed outward creed, formal Articles, etc., but to the spirit of the Church maintaining the same. Formal Creeds and Articles seldom change, but spiritual tempers and the changing emphasis on different aspects of belief slowly wax and wane with the years. The Ritual cannot be wrought with some for-the-moment all-powerful view, which in nowise touches or is touched by any Article.
3. Another principle of liturgical expression is that all such worship must be for edification. Worship exists for the building up of faith.⁴

The liturgy has always remained a working tool of the Church. It has come down from a glorious past and has shaped and molded the very life of the Church and its people. As one studies the history of Methodist worship, he becomes aware of two factors at work. On the one hand, there has always existed in the background, a high regard for the liturgy, and great care has been taken to preserve its position in the church. This is not to say that the people have

³Article 13 of the Methodist Articles of Religion states: "The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure word of God is preached and the sacrament duly administered in all those things that are of necessity requisite for the same."

⁴Harmon, op. cit., pp 65 - 66.

always found the liturgy to be meaningful, but that there has been a high respect for its purpose. On the other hand, Methodists have never been tied or bound to their liturgical heritage. History has shown that Methodist worship has accommodated itself to almost any environmental setting.

Methodists have always sought to be a holy people dedicated to service of their fellow man. The liturgy has helped to maintain this ideal within the life of the religious community. The worship service has always reflected the mood and temper of the whole Church as it sought to serve the world. Through the power invested by the Church in the liturgy, the people called Methodists have maintained a high respect for worship.

Liturgically speaking, one of Methodism's main areas of concern has been trying to combine two contrasting forms of worship. Freedom of form and extempore prayer were practiced, but also there was a deep concern for the established, historic order. Part of the conflict stemmed from the fact that large city churches would use the "Sunday Service," while the smaller churches in the country relied quite heavily on extemporary forms. As time passed, the order of service became simpler; but still the reminder of Methodism's historical heritage remained. Thus, there was always a conflict between the form and practice of public worship. This seeming conflict within the Methodist Church has been a strength through the years, but at times has caused much concern. This chapter will be concerned with Methodism's historical heritage as it relates to its liturgical

expression.

I. THE YEARS 1784-1850

At the Christmas Conference in Baltimore in 1784 the "Sunday Service" was adopted for use in the newly formed Methodist Episcopal Church. Whatcoat states of this action, "We agreed to form a Methodist Episcopal Church, in which the Liturgy (as presented by the Rev. John Wesley) should be read, and the sacraments be administered by a superintendent."⁵ The minutes of this conference along with the 'Sunday Service' and a 'Collection of Psalms and Hymns' were bound up for use by the ministers. Two years later in 1786, these services were already being ignored. Whereas Wesley had sought desperately to stem the tide between Anglicanism and Puritanism, thousands of his simple followers were unable to understand the archaic language of the Prayer Book. Consequently they were unable to gain any sense of worship from such formalism.⁶ Several factors were involved in this. First, the wishes of the majority could not be over-ruled by the most loyalist of the old-school Methodist ministers.⁷ The majority of the people from farmers and laborers and were unable to understand the literary style of the Anglican service; they felt worship that was led

⁵R. J. Cooke, History of the Ritual of the Methodist Episcopal Church (Cincinnati: Jennings & Pye), p. 168.

⁶Horton Davies, Worship and Theology in England, 1690-1965 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961-1965), II, 259.

⁷Ibid., p. 255.

by the Spirit was where the life of God dwelt. If their daily lives were informal they wanted their worship to be informal. Secondly, the liturgy reminded them of the 'Old Established Church' of England.⁸

They were trying to forget this dimension of their lives.

In the third place, it became clear that the experiences which the people were having in the prayer meetings, class meetings, and in preaching services could not be replaced by the strict formal liturgy of the Anglican Church.⁹ Even with Wesley's modifications, the people were unable to find meaning in the more formal setting. And fourthly, a new generation emerged on the scene who had never been influenced by or had experienced the Book of Common Prayer.¹⁰ The revival spirit seemed to be taking over and all those elements not found in Anglican worship were used. Even in the early period of Methodism, the worship services were filled with extempore prayer and preaching, the singing of joyful hymns, and at times the interruption of the Spirit as it spoke through the soul of an individual. In their small country churches, the people felt no need of the Prayer Book.

Because of these factors, the liturgical tradition of John Wesley did not exist very long. The years after the 1792 General Conference saw less and less formalism. Although that Conference

⁸Ibid.

⁹John Bishop, Methodist Worship in Relation to Free Church (London: Epworth Press, 1950), p. 86.

¹⁰Emory Stevens Bucke (ed.), The History of American Methodism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), I., 314.

accepted the second edition of the "Sunday Service," fewer and fewer of the congregations used it. In fact, that edition of the "Sunday Service" was the last to be published.¹¹ In that year the sacramental rites, occasional offices and Articles of Religion were incorporated into a book known as the Discipline. In 1792, there developed a movement to establish uniformity in the public worship of Methodists.¹² But, this movement amounted to nothing more than the orderly provision for singing, prayer, reading of the Old and New Testaments, and preaching.

What John Wesley sought to accomplish in America was perfectly clear, yet what actually took place was entirely different. Coke and Asbury were glad to accept the freedom which was given them and within a few years were calling themselves bishops. In this freedom given by Wesley they gave only lip service to the 'Sunday Service' at the Christmas Conference. With a history of informality in their societies, this informal nature continued after the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Many of the problems which came later were a result of this crucial time in Methodist history.

What happened in the late 1700's was inevitable under the circumstances. The conditions of the frontier life were such that the formal service of the Anglican Church was impractical. This dilemma

¹¹Davies, op. cit.

¹²Bard Thompson, Liturgies of the Western Church (Cleveland: World, 1965), p. 410.

of formal versus informal has remained a problem throughout the history of Methodism. Born in formality, the appeal of Wesley was to the miners and farmers. They were unable to handle the liturgy of the Church of England; and, as a result, the tradition of worship initiated by Wesley was soon to disappear.

In the English Methodist Church they tried to solve this problem by a "Plan of Pacification" which was passed in 1795. The essence of the document dealt with the legitimacy of the administering of the Lord's Supper in Methodist Churches. There were individuals who had never been associated with the Church of England and who felt the need for partaking of the Lord's Supper. These were mainly people from non-conformist backgrounds. They wanted the Methodist ministers to be able to give Communion. The high churchmen were fearful of this. As the controversy developed, not only was the issue of the administering of the Lord's Supper at stake; but also the liturgical Anglicanism versus the non-liturgical worship of the non-conformists.

The "Plan for Pacification" was an attempt by the loyalists to maintain a tradition which they knew would die if they did not act. They maintained that Wesley had proclaimed, "I live and die a member of the Church of England." The dissenters stated that Wesley never declared that he would not go any further from the Church and pleaded that breathing room was necessary for Methodists. They raised the point that Wesley had ordained ministers and that he meant for a separate Church to be established. Not very many years elapsed

before English Methodism also went the way of Free Worship. Davies states that it was "remarkable that the liturgy of the Church of England remained as it did."¹⁴

By the year 1807, the prevalent thinking was that the "Sunday Service" liturgy was destructive to the worshiping experience. In that year, George Bourne wrote a book on the life of John Wesley. In the book he states:

...the doctrines of the Methodist Church are stedfastly adhered to by the preachers- whilst the forms in the administration of the gospel ordinances are generally omitted. The form of prayer is not used at all, and many of the ministers conduct the service altogether extempore... Indeed there is a probability that these forms would never have been introduced, if Wesley and Dr. Coke had not been so partial to the English established Church and the reason for the rejection is obvious, they circumscribe the mind, and destroy the energy of divine worship so much, that the life of religion is lost in 'sounding brass and a tinkling cymbol.' But as it respects the admission of members, their rejection, their conduct, their characters, the Methodists adhere to the genuine spirit of their discipline. These remarks will rectify any mistake which might be made by those who judge of the Methodist economy from the volume published by the societies (the Discipline)- as that does not notice any departure from the printed regulations.¹⁵

This seems to be the general tone of feeling expressed by most writers of that time. Yet it is interesting to contrast this evaluation by Bourne with one made a few years later by Freeborn Garrettson in his speech entitled, 'Substance of the Semi-centennial Sermon' before the New York Annual Conference at its Session in May 1826. He makes these remarks:

¹⁴Davies, op. cit., II, 245-46. Davies records the major essence of this document.

¹⁵Ibid., II, 246.

With regard to the Lord's Prayer, and all our sacramental and other established forms, to be consistent with ourselves, we should make a regular use of them in all our churches, and congregations; and I am happy to find that in many places there is an increasing attention to those sacred usages.

But I am astonished to see some of our brethren...especially the young, laying aside such beautiful and expressive compositions. and marrying, baptizing, and even administering the Lord's Supper, extemporaneously. I am very sorry to lose a single sentence or even word of our sacramental forms...¹⁶

The bulk of evidence from that period gives the picture that in a majority of worshiping congregations, the emphasis was on preaching services, prayer meetings, and the singing of hymns and not on the formal liturgy. This change from a liturgical approach to a point where worship became almost "independent improvisation," was far from Wesley's original intention.¹⁷ The enthusiasm and spirit which Wesley imparted to his followers was maintained, but a loyalty to the Anglican liturgy was not. Puritan values became the standard for both behavior and worship. This tradition of freedom within worship remained in Methodist worship on into the twentieth century. The image of the so-called 'shouting' Methodist, who was somewhat boisterous in worship, began in those days of the early nineteenth century. In the United States well into the 1900's, the Wesley "Sunday Service" was practically unknown.

Here is seen the first seventy-five years of Methodist history.

¹⁶Bucke, op. cit., p. 314.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 315.

Born of the Spirit, Methodist congregations felt the need for freedom of the Spirit. In the early 1800's, there were the Camp meetings and the revival meetings. No longer was the concern for a liturgical worship service, but now the need was for the conversion of the individual. The goal was to "save" souls. All that was required for worship was a Bible from which to preach and a song book from which to sing. As the frontier moved westward, a Methodist evangelist was not far behind. This is the tradition which Methodism carried into the last half of the nineteenth century.

II. THE YEARS 1850-1900

One thing can be said of the Methodist Church, that where there are people, there is a Methodist preacher organizing a church. As people began to move westward, churches sprang up everywhere. In this kind of a situation there was little opportunity to develop elaborate liturgical ceremonies. Preaching was often done in a setting where there might not be any liturgical framework; worship would take place anywhere one could find a room big enough to hold a group of people. To add to this air of informality was the fact that many of the preachers did not have much education; and, as a result, had to rely a great deal on preaching from the Bible and from their own personal experiences.

By the year 1850, there was only a very small number of churches which still used the Anglican Order of Worship or the

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abridgement made by John Wesley. Hardly a minister was left who remembered the days when Methodist societies were the Church of England. Most of the churches were without a copy of the Sunday Service. It had been dropped out of publication, and only a single sparse "Order of Worship" was printed. In the 1886 Discipline it was clearly stated that order and uniformity in public worship were binding on both preacher and congregation.¹⁹ It stated that within the order of worship in the morning the following items should be present:

- (1) Singing - the congregation standing
- (2) Prayer - the congregation kneeling (extempore or liturgical)
- (3) Reading a lesson of the Old Testament or the New Testament
- (4) Singing - the congregation standing
- (5) Preaching
- (6) Singing- the congregation standing
- (7) Prayer-the congregation kneeling (extempore)
- (8) Benediction (II Cor. 13:14)²⁰

A worship service which followed this order was not what Wesley prescribed, but it sought to restore some order and uniformity to Methodist Services. For the remainder of the 19th century and into the twentieth century the service of worship was marked by great simplicity.

Methodist ministers during this age were well known for their powerful preaching. Many of them would go into the pulpit without

¹⁸George Hedley, "Some Factors in Worship" (Los Angeles: 1959), Address II, p. 9.

¹⁹Davies, op. cit., II, 249.

²⁰Bucke, op. cit., II, 629.

the benefit of a manuscript, to leave as much room as possible for the work of the Holy Spirit.²¹ One of the reasons for this emphasis on preaching came as a result of an early Methodist restriction. Because in the early Methodist Societies there were no ordained clergy to administer the sacraments, many of the people began to think of the preaching service as the main worship experience.²² During this period many got out of the custom of taking communion regularly, and were not interested in doing so. The powerful preaching was enough to satisfy their hungry souls.

Many of the preachers attempted to maintain Wesley's admonition to preach both Law and Gospel. They tried to use texts which their congregations could comprehend. However, the great majority tended toward greater and greater informality. There was a great deal of debate as to the outbursts which often occurred when a Methodist minister preached. Crowthers puts forth this statement when talking about the ridicule aimed at Methodists for outbursts. He states, "I would rather risk the danger of an excessive vitality of the Holy Spirit than of dead formality."²³ Crowthers goes on to state that many Methodist ministers could not follow the Anglican liturgy because of its snobish attitude toward all who could not be served Communion. Thus it was a combination of events which caused

²¹Ibid., II, 630.

²²Davies, op. cit., II, 254.

²³Ibid., II, 259.

formal worship to almost completely disappear. A frontier setting and a bad beginning (because of a lack of ordained and educated clergy) were the main causes.

As far as the liturgy itself was concerned, very few changes were or have been made during the history of Methodism. This may be due to the fact that the freedom which has been characteristic within Methodism has caused ministers to develop their own patterns of worship without regard to the set liturgy itself, or it may mean that the liturgy is so excellent that change has never been needed. Whatever the case, Methodists have never felt a need to change the liturgy very much. Minor changes in wording have taken place, but never any real significant addition or deletion.

The victory of free prayer over a set pattern of worship in Methodism was never complete. In spite of all the forces at work which sought to eliminate the "Sunday Service," the job never was quite finished. Throughout all this growth and change, several churches rejoiced in using the Wesley Service.²⁴ Known as high Methodist, these churches had maintained the liturgical heritage which had been given them. As the people began, in the late 1800's, to move into the cities, there was a renewed interest in Wesleyan worship. Many congregations began using an abridged form of the Anglican worship service. The freedom which had been characteristic in the past now began to express itself in a form which recovered

²⁴Ibid., II, 254.

much of the structure of the Sunday Service adopted in 1784.²⁵

A new concept of Methodist worship emerged. People became more sophisticated and no longer felt the revivalism of the 1850's meaningful. They wanted a more stately religious service to match this new sophistication. The frontier religion was now dying out and with it the informality and earthiness which characterized it.

III. THE YEARS 1900-1950

Change is always a difficult thing, especially when generations have been used to doing something a certain way. So ingrained had the importance of preaching been in worship, that for most people the rest of the service was just preliminary warm-up. Wesley thought of the sermon as a means of proclaiming the Word of God, but only as this related to the other elements of the liturgy (especially Communion). By 1900, Communion was only observed quarterly in most Methodist churches, and preaching was dominant.

At this time there was a feeling of ambivalence. The people wanted order, yet at the same time they found no real meaning in the Anglican liturgy. I think Townsend, in his book published in 1909, exemplified this frustration when he wrote:

With regard to public worship; it is, on the whole, growing more orderly and reverent, qualities essential when men meet regularly for so high a function. In times of revivalistic excitement there is an inevitable tendency to give place to

²⁵Ibid., II, 250.

immediate strong feeling, to throw aside the laws which must rule rational assemblies of men. But in the life of the Church, orderly and regular devotion is necessary not only to the intensity of spiritual life, but to steady work and to a lofty standard of conduct. The advance of public education imposes this upon us more than ever. There still remain a considerable number of Wesleyan churches which to this end use on Sunday mornings the Church of England Prayer Book; and those cultured church members who have been brought up to its use are generally loth to part with it. But the bulk of modern congregations, especially where they are largely composed of country-bred Methodists, find in it no religious sympathy. Its archaic, though stately and rythmic language is too remote from their common speech; they cannot enter into the prayers read from a book, and it does not come home to them that a prayer listened to from the pulpit is very difficult to follow.²⁶

Townsend then goes on to tell how the church sought to deal with this problem. He states that the feeling was so strong against the liturgy being used, that any progress which had been made in seeking to restore it was quickly dying out. His solution to this problem was to very carefully prepare worship so that it did not really appear to be liturgically oriented. He states,

Attention, therefore, should be directed to supplying in some other way the elements of worship in which the liturgical service is strong. Very careful prayers, sufficiently long and varied to carry those of the congregation who listen through the main topic for which public prayer should ordinarily be made; full and well-marked reading of scriptural lessons, anthems, select psalms, and one or two of the finer prayers of confession or of things culled from the Prayer Book or other sources, will be sufficient to train a congregation to make common prayer for the great things, public or private, which ought to raise their desires and keep alive the conception of the Good of the Church.²⁷

²⁶W. J. Townsend, H. B. Workman, George Eayrs, A History of Methodism (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909), II, 493-94.

²⁷Ibid., II, 494.

During the 1914 General Conference, for the first time in the history of Methodism, a statement was issued that recognized the Ritual as something more than a temporary expression. Up until this time not much thought had been given to the process of maintaining or changing the liturgy. Whenever a change needed to be made, there was no set rule as to how it was to be accomplished. But at the 1914 Conference the Committee on the Constitution made this report:

It is our judgement, not hastily but deliberately made, that the Forms for Administration of Baptism, and the Lord's Supper and the Ordination Services cannot be changed by a simple majority vote of the General Conference. Should it be thought best to change any of these Forms, it ought to be done in a constitutional manner. We, therefore, advise that the Forms contained in the Discipline of 1808 be replaced in the next edition of the Discipline and remain there until by a constitutional process a change is made.²⁸

This action was passed by that Conference, returning some emphasis and importance to the liturgy.

Then in 1918 another event occurred which helped to bring into the consciousness of Methodists the significance of a liturgical worship service. In that year, Bishop Wilbur Patterson Thirkield published his book, Services and Prayers for Church and Home.²⁹ Methodism owes a great debt to Bishop Thirkield for this work. For not only did it make Methodists more aware of the importance of Wesley's service, but it exposed many ministers to Wesley's service

²⁸Harmon, op. cit., p. 68.

²⁹Hedley, op. cit., II, 10.

for the first time. For many the Bishop's book was their first contact with the great prayers of the historic church. Thus began an educational process which is still being emphasized today. This educative process has been slow and painful. Many ministers and lay people have felt that the liturgy, in wording, was archaic and have not sought to understand its meaning. The external words are a mental block to their understanding of the worship experience.

In the 1920's, there began to appear in Methodism a return to Anglican formalism, even while the Methodist Church dropped the term Episcopal from its name. Wesley's "Sunday Service" reappeared in the literature of the Methodist Church.³⁰ Worship took on a much more stately and dignified dimension without losing the warmth of the previous period. The people were being exposed to a liturgical service, yet at the same time they kept the spontaneity of worship that they had experienced in the past. Although the practice of serving Communion every Sunday was never re-established, Wesley's Order for the Lord's Supper came to be used with only minor modification.

In the year 1935, a Book of Divine Worship was published by the Conference in England. Nine years later the General Conference in the United States voted to publish a similar book. For the first time since Wesley's "Sunday Service," the Methodists had a book devoted entirely to the liturgy of the church. In the introduction to

³⁰From conversation with Methodist ministers serving during this era.

the English book, it states: "In preparing and presenting this Book of Divine Worship we have been guided by the conviction that both traditions which Methodism had inherited, the liturgical and the free, have elements of value which should be carefully preserved and blended.³¹

J. Ernest Rattenbury in his book published in 1938, Vital Elements in Public Worship, offered some suggestions for improving the morning worship:

1. Reconsider the desirability of regular children's sermons.
2. Restore two Lessons and use the Canticles and Psalms printed at the back of the hymnal.
3. Cultivate a more scientific use of hymns, so that the four elements of public worship which Wesley described as Depreciation, Petition, Praise, Intercession, may all have their place.
4. Observe the Christian Year, for nothing so roots worship in fact.
5. Cultivate intervals of silence.
6. Give a place for the vocal prayers and responses of the people.³²

During these years, it was suggested that the ideal Sunday morning service might be one in which the Holy Communion was central, preceded by the ministry of the Word, which could prepare the minds of the worshipers for a worthy reception of the Sacrament. As in Wesley's time the emphasis was placed upon a liturgical worship service. Yet as is many times the case, what is suggested and what is

³¹ Taken from the Book of Divine Worship of the Methodist Church of England.

³²J. Ernest Rattenbury, Vital Elements in Public Worship (London: Epworth Press, 1938), p. 17.

actually done are two different things. The ministry for the most part, was not yet ready or trained to make liturgical worship meaningful.

Also in the 1930's and 40's the worship in Methodism became more aesthetic. Emphasis was placed upon form and beauty rather than upon meaning.³³ An example of this is that in the 1939 hymnal the first hymn "Holy! Holy! Holy!" replaced the Charles Wesley hymn "O For A Thousand Tongues to Sing" (which had been first in the 1905 hymnal). This change suggested that a greater emphasis was being placed on the beauty of worship as a corporate experience. Part of this trend included the desire to restore the more traditional orders of worship. Had the seminaries during this time placed in their curriculums more of an emphasis on worship, maybe the church as a whole might have developed greater appreciation for the liturgy. Despite this, the need for a more concrete liturgical framework was seen and a growing tendency away from so much informality began.

This brings us up to the contemporary liturgical movement in Methodism. Methodism still remains perched on the fence with a free church concern with the work of the Spirit on the one side, and a liturgical emphasis on the other. Cooke states:

The mystical tinge in the devout aspirations of Wesley gave a distinctive character to their devotions, while his steadfast adherence to the Liturgy of the Church demonstrated that devotion to form was not incompatible with the loftiest spiritual fervor. Methodists, therefore, have never been opposed or indifferent to

³³ From conversations with Methodist ministers serving during this era.

the Ritual. Its dignity of expression, its simplicity, its strength and beauty and pathos, instinct with the orders of pure devotion, still stir piety's flame, and by the gracious aid of the Holy Spirit prepare the reverent soul for the sacred service as when it was first adopted by the Methodist fathers.³⁴

Thus, Wesley offers a continuing challenge as worshipping Methodists seek a vital religious life.

IV. CONCLUSION

Throughout its history, Methodism has sought to combine the liturgical and the non-liturgical types of worship. Both in theory and in practice, these factors have been in evidence. In the larger city churches, the congregations have shown a preference for a liturgical worship setting. In the smaller country churches, the people have preferred a simpler form of worship. Methodist history has been marked by a struggle to combine the two into a single worship service.

As an individual examines the history of worship in Methodism, many of the problems which plague the church today become clear. It can be seen that the factors which led to the elimination of the "Sunday Service" from the worshipping practices of early Methodists changed from the intention of Wesley for order in worship. In fact, the people went to the other extreme of unstructured improvisation in worship. The Church maintained Wesley's enthusiasm and devotion, but they now developed it within a Puritan framework.³⁵ As a result

³⁴ Cooke, op. cit., p. 171.

³⁵ Hedley, op. cit., p. 9.

the Methodist heritage is at once objective and subjective, corporate and individualistic.

As the contemporary church seeks to find new ways of expressing its faith liturgically, the study of the history of worship in Methodism is necessary. The language of the Anglican Service given to Methodists has been irrelevant, but the Anglican belief in a corporate devotional life has remained. Taking this, and combining it with the experimental and contemporary worship of Methodist practice, the liturgy can and will speak in the church today.

CHAPTER VI

THE CONTEMPORARY TREND IN METHODIST WORSHIP WITH A EMPHASIS ON THE 1964 BOOK OF WORSHIP

Within the life of nearly every organization there seem to be two main factors which are essential to the life of that organization. First, there is the central idea or purpose for which the organization was created; and second, there is the machinery and inner-workings which are required to maintain the organizational structure. The former should always be primary, but too often the situation seems to be reversed, with the maintenance of the organization taking priority over the central objective. The Methodist Church has been no exception to this rule.

The years since unification have seen much emphasis placed upon structural details. This seems to have been necessary in order to keep a church of over ten million members moving forward. The majority of time spent in General Conferences, as well as in Annual Conferences, has been used to discuss procedures and programs by which the boards and agencies of the church function. While the purpose of these groups has always been to educate and strengthen the spiritual life of the membership, a person standing on the outside might only see the organization seeking to perpetuate itself. The Methodist Church has often been criticized at just this point.

In recent years many people have expressed a concern for a renewal of the church as a witnessing community. With this concern

has come a new interest in the liturgy as an expression of man's faith. Worship is to be the celebration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ rather than one hour spent in the sanctuary each Sunday.¹

Christian worship always is celebration. This is so because a victory is the basis of Christian worship. It is the victory of Almighty God through Jesus Christ. It is God's victory over our death and over our life; it is the triumph of his purpose to redeem his whole creation to willing responsiveness to him. It is a victory that was won in principle by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and now is to be realized in full. Because it is victory, the whole telling forth (announcing proclamation) of what God has done, will do, and is doing through Jesus Christ is called the gospel - "good news". It is "good news" that calls for thankful rejoicing in a different way from any other good news, for God's victory through Jesus Christ is the single source of meaning and hope for our lives. Christian worship, then, has its meaning in the victorious love of God.²

This is the goal toward which all Christian worship should be moving.

Thus there is a new interest in the area of worship and liturgies. A number of persons were uneasy over the lack of spontaneity and joy witnessed in worship. The majority of congregations felt the archaic language and the irrelevance of much of the liturgy was a deterring factor. Several experimental liturgies were tried in selected situations, but very few of these were actually used in the churches across the country. Very few ministers and congregations were willing to try the unfamiliar.

Recognizing this fact, the Commission on Worship at the 1960

¹Grady Hardin, Joseph Quillan, Jr., and James White, The Celebration of the Gospel (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), pp. 3-16.

²Ibid., p. 13.

General Conference of the Methodist Church was directed to make available a Proposed Book of Worship for study and trial use by Methodist congregations.³ During the following four years, local congregations were to use this Book of Worship in an attempt to assist the Commission in developing a liturgical framework which would speak to contemporary man. At the end of this four year period, very few changes were made by the Commission, the main reason being that very few congregations were well enough educated in liturgies to make the trial use of the liturgy effective. As a result, the Commission was not able to gather much information concerning how relevant the proposed Book of Worship would be.

The Commission, in preparing the new liturgy, studied the traditions and customs of the Christian Church as they related to liturgical practice. The American Prayer Book of the Episcopal Church aided them in restoring the past to the present. The order of the liturgy, the content of the liturgy, and the congregation's role in the liturgy were all studied from a historical perspective.

The Commission felt strongly that there is a "good" and an "inferior" way to worship God.⁴ The new Book of Worship seeks to relate to modern man while, at the same time, it seeks to be loyal

³Report of the Commission on Worship to the General Conference of the Methodist Church - 1964 (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1965), p. V.

⁴Ibid.

to the pattern of worship of John Wesley as developed through the history of the Christian Church. This two-fold purpose the Commission feels it accomplished. In two statements given by the Commission, we find these words: "We believe that the widespread use of this order will give the people called Methodists a form of worship which is true to their heritage, and is theologically and historically valid and is not constrictive, but which provides rich and generous use of Scriptures and the devotional literature of Christendom."⁵ And then in the preface to the 1964 Book of Worship we find these words:

The Book of Worship is designed to provide significant structure for the worship of the Church. It is not intended in any way to fetter the spontaneity or reject the reliance upon the Holy Spirit which have characterized Methodist worship throughout its history. Rather the Book of Worship seeks to claim for the Church and its people the total Methodist heritage in worship. John Wesley, himself, by his devotion to the Book of Common Prayer and his ordering of the "Sunday Service of the Methodists in America" has made us heirs of the deeply meaningful historic forms of devotion of the universal Church. As we make these our own we shall find that the Holy Spirit will move among us with mighty power.⁶

The Commission did not intend that every congregation should rigidly adhere to the Book of Worship in every worship situation. They felt that there are certain principles which are aids to true worship. In the 1964 Order, they sought to emphasize these basic principles. The Commission hoped that each congregation might

⁵Ibid., p. 2.

⁶The Book of Worship for Church and Home (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1965), preface.

pattern a liturgical setting which would be most meaningful to them.

The liturgy recommended for use in Methodist Churches contains all the basic elements of vital Christian worship: adoration, confession, forgiveness, praise, thanksgiving, proclamation of the Word, and dedication of life. In this book, two orders of worship are given. The first, although containing all elements of Christian worship, is a briefer form.⁷ It does not attempt to provide for all the direction of the conduct of worship through detailed rubrics and specific prayers. The second order has listed the full rubrics together with suggested prayers and other material.⁸ It is the feeling of the author of this paper that the second order should be used by congregations until such time that they come to some understanding as to the meaning of worship. Too often, ministers and congregations experiment with worship without first having a full understanding of what worship really is. Both of the previously mentioned services, along with the "Order for the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper,"⁹ are thoroughly grounded in Scripture.

The new Order of the Lord's Supper is a complete order of morning service. It is not a service to be tacked onto the end of some other service of worship. The Order begins with praise and confession; and proceeds, act by act, through all the stages of worship,

⁷ Ibid., p. 3.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 4-6.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 15-23.

concluding with the dedication of the individual worshiper to God.

The Commission felt that to develop a complete worship service, in the sense that they understood the meaning of worship, the sequence of prayers, as set forth in the Crammer service in the Book of Common Prayer, would have to be broken.¹⁰ The Invitation, General Confession, and the Prayer for Pardon were taken from their traditional place after the Creed and the Sermon, breaking up the sequence of prayers said by the priest for the people, which led directly to the receiving of the elements. They now proceed the Creed in the order of worship.

The Prayer for the Whole State of Christ's Church has been restored to the Communion Service by the Commission. Also, they provided that the congregation would participate in saying it. Many of the prayers originally said by the priest are now said in unison by the minister and the congregation.

The basis of Methodist belief concerning communion is found in Article eighteen, nineteen, and twenty of Wesley's Twenty-five Articles.¹¹ Here Wesley speaks of the body and blood of Christ being eaten after a heavenly and spiritual manner. Faith is a pre-requisite for obtaining the full endowment of the meal. This spiritual presence is a *réal* presence of Christ at the supper, and means the

¹⁰Report of the Commission on Worship, p. 24.

¹¹Henry Wheeler, History and Exposition of the Twenty-five of Religion of the Methodist Episcopal Church (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1908), pp. 313-349.

genuine appropriation of grace through the sacrament when it is received in sincerity and trust. The liturgical forms which surround the Lord's Supper must always be in harmony with this theological understanding.

In structuring the Lord's Supper, the Commission is saying that it is to be celebrated often. This is to allow the worshiper to renew his faith in God as he becomes spiritually bonded to all other believers on earth. The service is ordered in such a way that the worshiper is enabled to grow toward the goal of union with God in Christ.

The Book of Worship, designed by the Commission on Worship, creates opportunities for congregations to become a part of the Church, with all that this means. They are not only united with those who are present, but with all Christians in every age as they seek to be the living body of Christ. In the book, The Celebration of the Gospel, we find these words:

Christian worship serves God's purpose to bring his children into a community of faith, at one with him and with one another. In worship we praise God and give thanks to him for who he is and for what he does; and in worship he continues to reveal who he is, and continues to do his work in us for which we praise and give thanks to him. Also, Christian worship is celebration with other Christians of all times and places. All Christians are members together of the community of living faith that is the church. In worship, we continue to find together new dimensions of the meaning and way of life as members of the community of faith. Christian worship is celebration that relates us to God and to one another, renewing us in the meaning and power of God's victory in Jesus Christ.¹²

¹²Hardin, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

What influence has this new Book of Worship had on worship practices in Methodist congregations? It is probably still too early to definitely tell, though some interesting things have taken place thus far. A few churches have taken the new liturgy and have used it as a guide and model in developing their worship, not tying themselves down to the book; but studying it to develop experimental liturgies which will enable modern man to better experience the reality of God. Many congregations have taken the Book as an end rather than a beginning; and, as a result, have ended up either following the liturgy to the letter or not using it at all. I think an article written by Daniel Walker entitled, "Good Liturgy? Who Says So," expresses the feeling of many congregations. In this article he states:

Until recently I have rejoiced in the refreshing lack of rigidity in the ecclesiastical life of Methodism... Now I feel myself being quietly pressured by a new dogmatism, gently but persistently applied. It doesn't take the harsh forms usually associated with religious dogmatism, but the formation of a new absolutism is there just the same under a velvet cover. It has to do with what is liturgically correct... I have no objection to any of these liturgical ideas in themselves, and I used them at one time or another. But there is a new "Do it this way because it is the correct way" mood developing.¹³

So many congregations have failed to use the new Book of Worship to gain a better understanding of worship. Certainly there is a "correct way" to worship just as there is a "wrong way," yet there is a great deal of freedom liturgically which allows individual congregations to use those dimensions which are most meaningful to them in

¹³Daniel Walker, "Good Liturgy? Who Says So," Christian Advocate, XI:1(December 28, 1967), 12.

their particular situation.

Perhaps the Commission, in using the historic liturgy as a model, should have given to the people some guidelines as to how to build upon this structure. Not every minister is able to develop his own pattern and style of liturgical service. The Book of Worship might have been improved if it had included several possible contemporary liturgies to use as examples. Most congregations feel that the Commission advocated the historic liturgy as the only legitimate means of worship. Had the Commission been more specific in their directions as to the use of the liturgy in the contemporary setting, then I feel there would be more congregations using it effectively.

However, the really important thing is that man's need for meaningful worship has risen again to the level of consciousness, and that people seem to be more concerned about worshiping in a meaningful way. The historic practices of worship are once more being tested. One result of this is the liturgical renewal movement which is taking place within Methodism today.¹⁴ This movement is seeking to regain the sacramental insights of John Wesley as they relate to the developing of a Christian way of life in the present world situation. The men who are heading this movement are convinced that liturgical and sacramental worship is not something that Methodism must

¹⁴This movement is deeply concerned about renewing worship practices within Methodism, but it is also concerned about and involved in the liturgical movement throughout the Christian community.

introduce, but rather something that Methodism once possessed and to which it must return. They are intent upon educating the clergy and the laity as to the significance of liturgical worship in the life of the church. If this had have been done ten years ago, before this new Book of Worship was published, the congregations could have perhaps used the new book more effectively. As a result of this movement, many congregations are rediscovering the significance of worship in their life and the deeper meaning they are gaining from it is spreading to other areas of their activity and concern. Service and outreach are a natural outgrowth of a meaningful liturgical setting.

The reason for the popularity of Wesleyan worship was that it was authentic. Wesley told his preachers always to practice what they preached. They should always use simplicity of speech and their manner should be earnest. He wanted his people to know that he was always searching for perfect love. The people appreciated this authenticity as they sought to discover the love of Christ. They came to the Methodist societies because there they could find warmth and sincerity and concern. As in every age, those were the dimensions which helped individuals to experience fulfillment in life. A return to the authenticity of the Wesleyan tradition seems to be what is needed in the Methodist Church today.

CHAPTER VII

WORSHIP AS EXPERIENCING GOD

The true test of any liturgy is how it affects the lives of men. As people come into the presence of God, something significant and transforming must take place. Therefore, the place to begin in developing a liturgy is by speaking about its meaning and purpose. After a careful study of the historic liturgy, especially as it relates to the people called Methodists, this author would now like to state his understanding of worship.

The meaning of the word liturgy is "people at work" which makes it an action word referring to something being done. The Liturgy in the early church, according to Dom Gregory Dix, was something done - not said or sung or seen - but something done.¹ The Liturgy was not the work of a priest who spoke the words of the Mass for the people in a foreign tongue, but it was the combined action of the whole worshipping community seeking to be at one with God and with each other. Dix states:

The Holy Church offered the Eucharist as the re-calling before God and men of the offering of Christ. All that which He had done, once and for all as the Priest and Proclaimer of the revelation of the kingship of God, the Church, which is the fulfilling of Him, enters into and fulfills. Christ and His Church are one, with one mission, one life, one prayer, one Gospel, one offering, one being, one Father. Such a conception left little room for regarding one order in the Church, whether bishop or

¹Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy (London: Dacre Press, 1964), p. 1.

presbyter, as in any executive sense the representative of Christ to the Church.²

The special quality of worship is that everybody shall be enabled and encouraged to take full and active part in it. Each individual worshiper is a sharer in this act of celebration as he becomes involved in the activity of the liturgy. Worship is not an esthetic ceremony, but it is the effect of the religious experience as the congregation acts to become the body of Christ. The goal of this action within the liturgy is to unite man with his God through the redemptive event of Jesus Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit. The ultimate fulfillment of this action is the reality of God's kingdom upon this earth.

The crises we face in worship today, according to Dr. James White, "is that modern society has been affected by a massive revolution in the modes of perceiving reality, widely known as the communication revolution."³ The communication revolution favors perceiving reality by direct participation - involvement. This means that the congregation is no longer an audience but that they must be participants. Society has gone away from the thought that the written and spoken word are the only means of communication. Today, television and motion pictures are two of the ways people communicate. Many more of our senses and thought processes are involved in these methods of

²Ibid., p. 260.

³James F. White, "The Crisis in Worship"(Dallas: Perkins School of Theology, 1967), p. 2.

communication. We participate more fully. The same must be true of worship, something must happen within the worship experience which allows the worshipers to be participants in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Dr. White goes on to state that the "older generation" sees no real crisis in worship today, for they still perceive worship the way they have in the past. They see worship as only a spectator involvement. But the "younger generation" is finding the worship service a meaningless affair because nothing is really "happening." They want more than just words thrown at them, they want to be "turned on." They want to be involved and participating. "If the medium is the message; then much of Protestant worship indicates that the message is not very vital or relevant to them."⁴

Thus, in order for the worship service to be meaningful, the worshiper must actually feel that he is a part of the worshipping community, and is sharing in the love and the concern which is expressed in the acts of worship. If worship is just a lot of meaningless words, then it is another indication of the hypocrisy being expressed in the name of the Christian faith. Worship must enable man to become involved in life as it really is, in order to transform that life. To accomplish this, man must be an active participant in worship.

Each person must take a full and active part in worship so that oneness may come through the work of the Holy Spirit. Here is

⁴Ibid., p. 3.

the essence of worship - man united with God through Jesus Christ, through which sinful humanity is integrated into the body of Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Let us examine worship, then, in this framework, remembering always that the reality of it is possible only when men become actual participators in its message.

I. UNION WITH GOD

The Church is the assembly of people gathered together for the express purpose of seeking God. The liturgy is the agent which opens the channels for a dialogue between God and man. The Word of God comes to man, who in turn responds by giving himself to God. God initiates the action through the granting of His grace to man, which causes man in turn to dedicate his life to a life of love in God. Worship is the glad acknowledgement of God's infinite greatness, and the ready-giving of man's thanks for it.

An important factor in this dialogue is the fact that God is the initiator and man responds.⁵ Often man tries to take it upon himself to induce God's presence through the acts of the liturgy. He feels that in and through the authority of his actions in worship, God's presence will be encountered. "The encounter fails for it is up to God alone to initiate the encounter and to grant to man his grace, when and as he desires. God can be the object of our worship

⁵Richard Paquier, Dynamics of Worship (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 3.

only if he is first the subject."⁶ Man is able to consider God the subject of his worship only because God has first come to man in love. The acts of worship come only as a response to God's initial action. Therefore, a primary function of the liturgy is to glorify God and to give thanks to God for his love.

This must be considered as liturgies are developed. Worship is not for the express purpose of seeking God's presence, but it is the responding to God's redemptive act in Jesus Christ in praise and celebration.⁷ Only after this acknowledgement can man seek to pattern his life anew. As man responds in adoration to God, his whole attention is given in discovering God's purpose for him. The function of worship is to declare the "worth-ship" of God rather than expressing the thoughts and opinions of men. Only when a man acknowledges this love expressed by God is he able to come into the presence of God. Man comes to worship completely naked before God in the hope that God through his grace will enable him to find the fulfilling purpose of life.

Much Protestant worship is lacking in the spirit of obtaining an immediate sense of the presence of God. Catholic worship creates this sense of real presence in the Prayer of Consecration. At this point the worshiper and the worshiped become as one. In Protestant

⁶Ibid., pp. 3-4.

⁷George Hedley, "Some Factor in Worship," (Los Angeles: 1959), Address 1, p. 4.

worship, the stress has been on the fellowship of saints, and to a large extent has been void of any sense of a real presence. The emphasis of worship is turned toward intellectual attentiveness rather than union with God.⁸ The minister plans his worship around a theme without a real conception of bringing the congregation into the presence of the Almighty.

The congregation needs to feel that in worship something is taking place more than just the stimulation of the intellect. Protestant worship needs to develop an objective side. It needs to assist the worshiper in his search for a meaningful faith. This faith can only come when an individual can discover who he is in relationship to his ground of being, and only as an individual experiences something real happening in worship can he be brought into a confrontation with God. Worship brings the fears, frustrations, and anxiousness of life to a clear focus in One who is able to overcome the stumbling blocks of life. Worship allows an individual to experience God at the point of life where that individual is at that moment. His past, present, and future are merged into one.

As man comes into the presence of God through the acts of the liturgy, his life is unveiled. He is able to see God's plan for his life; and, in turn, is able to respond to this challenge. James White states:

⁸ John Bishop, Methodist Worship in Relation to Free Church Worship (London: Epworth Press, 1950), p. 6.

I understand Christian worship to be the encounter with reality at its deepest level in which we perceive that all being ultimately depends upon God. Like a mirror, worship has two aspects, transparency and reflection. We see through to the source of being and respond to it in worship. Worship is thus the insight into the ground of all being and our response to it.

In this sense worship becomes a way of perceiving the true nature of reality and responding in a fitting manner to it. We may know abstractly that God acts in this world but in worship we experience God giving Himself to us. We come to meet God and we meet our neighbor, discovering the world itself as the sphere of God's creating activity.⁹

Here Dr. White points out the end result of the worship experience - that of discovering the self in relationship to creation. Through His creation, God has expressed to man a love and concern. He has shown man that He is willing to forgive man for his sinfulness against His creation. In response, man worships God in spirit and in truth. In this worship, God and man are brought into union, and man is able to perceive his nature as it relates to creation. He is able to see himself as he relates to the source of his being and, in turn, to his neighbor. Man's response to this kind of confrontation, this kind of reality, is a dedication to a life which will reflect the love and concern shown to him.

Thus God invites His people to serve him.¹⁰ Worship is not concerned merely with "doing" the liturgy within the four walls of the sanctuary, but it is the spreading of the good news to all the

⁹White, op. cit., p. 1.

¹⁰Paquier, op. cit., p. 9.

world. Liturgy is seen as evangelism. The response to God's gift of love is the offering of the self to serve Him through life. In this dialogue which takes place between God's initiative and man's response, the divine Presence, given through grace and received in faith, is recognized and grasped in its reality and power.

Worship is the special occasion within the life of the church when the presence of God is evident. Through the liturgy, the Church becomes aware of itself as the people of God and in turn presents itself to the world as a living sacrifice. In becoming aware of its nature, the people see themselves as the body of Christ - the Incarnation of God. The mighty acts of God in Jesus Christ become the central point in this quest for dialogue with God.

II. COMMUNION WITH JESUS CHRIST

To say that God is present in worship means that He comes to us, and when He comes to us in the Gospel, He comes in Christ. The main service that God renders to man in worship, therefore, is that He reveals Himself and gives Himself in Jesus Christ. God's presence to be present through Christ when, in worship, His Word and Sacrament were proclaimed. In Matthew 18:20, the following words can be found. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Through Jesus Christ, God reveals to man that He is sovereign over all things. Through the power of God's victory in Jesus Christ, the Church, as the people of God, are in communion with Him and with each other.

J. J. von Allmen in his recent book, Worship Its Theology and Practice, has a section entitled "The Christological Basis of Church Worship."¹¹ In this section he writes that the New Testament shows the historical ministry of Jesus and hence His whole life as a liturgical process. He defines this liturgical process as the "true glorification of God on earth" which was truly fulfilled by Jesus Christ in His ministry. The Christological basis of the Church's worship then involves the ministry of Jesus, that is, the act of His perfect worship which He made of His life. In His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus has given to man the true meaning of worship. In this sense, worship is not restricted to the liturgical acts, but to the life which comes about as the acts are fulfilled.

Wesley sought to renew this concept within the worship service he sent to America. In dividing the service into three parts, confession, proclamation, and service, he intended to remind the worshiper of his life in Christ. Man must be aware of his sinfulness. In turn, he proclaims the Word of God and goes forth victorious in dedicated service.

Because of the guarantee given the disciples, Christ is present each time a group of people gather in His name. The assurance of Christ's living presence with them following His death and resurrection was enough to convince them that He was God. The Church is

¹¹J. J. von Allmen, Worship: Its Theology and Practice (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 21-26.

not living in a state of illusion then when it assembles in the name of Christ.¹² Worship must not be celebrated as a past event, but is something which is celebrated anew each time men worship. Christ's awareness is made known each time men join in His name. Again this awareness cannot be something which is induced, but is given to man as a sheer gift. Christ's presence can only be invoked - "Maranatha - Come Lord Jesus." Thus, it is not the assembling for worship, or the proclamation of His Word, or the administering of the Sacrament that is the procuring agent for the presence of Christ, but His coming to man in the fulfillment of a promise He Himself made.

We can say with certainty that the experience of the congregation in the Lord's Supper is that Christ, the crucified and risen Lord, acts as the host at the meal and with it gives Himself.¹³ The worshiper comes to the Eucharist to proclaim the mighty acts of God in Christ and to celebrate and set forth what Christ has done for him. By listening to the proclamation of His Word and by celebrating His death and resurrection, the congregation becomes contemporary with Jesus as He comes into their midst.

In a unique way, the Christian, through the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, is brought into the fellowship of all others

¹²Ibid., p. 27.

¹³Wilhelm Hahn, Worship and Congregation (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963), p. 20.

who are partaking. "As the bread and wine become an integral part of ourselves ... so Christ unites with us, becomes life of our lives and soul of our souls."¹⁴ Through the Eucharist, the congregation becomes a part of the great saving act of God in Christ Jesus. As the congregation shares in this event, the future becomes clear to them. All Christian action in this world is really nothing else than the finished work of Christ becoming operative through the living body, the Church. This is the place where all Christians must start. United in Christ through the Eucharist, all must become renewed persons collectively seeking to bring God's kingdom upon this earth.

We go forth from worship rejoicing and praising God that we can serve Him through our lives. This joy which is now experienced is the presence of Christ within us. This is the celebration of worship, not only that Christ has risen; but also that He is alive within man seeking to conquer evil and proclaim love. Man must not shy away from this gift and be afraid of its challenges. In an article on "Christian Worship - Decline and Recovery" issued by the Free Church Fellowship this criticism is leveled at modern Protestant worship:

The average Sunday Service of Free Church worship is hardly to be described as a Communion in the Body and Blood of Christ; a

¹⁴J. D. Benoit, Liturgical Renewal: Studies in Catholic and Protestant Developments on the Continent (London: S.C.M. Press, 1958), p. 49.

tasting of the powers of the New Age; a recognition that in Christ the Kingdom of God has come among us; a covenant with Him to shake His conflict with the existing order of things; on occasion for the sure reception of the power of His Resurrection to judge and overthrow the citadels of evil in our midst. It tends to decline to a more prosaic level on which it is enough if we find encouragement in the consolation of the Gospel, forgiveness for the sins of the past week and renewal of the asperation after a more Christian way of living - a good thing indeed, but how far from the terrifying splendor of the new life promised in the Gospel to the true Church of Jesus Christ.¹⁵

We must go forth with courage as we seek to invoke the presence of Christ within our worship. The results may not be what we want them to be, but they will give man a taste of a New Age of Christian "Agape." This means that the Church, as the body of Christ, must selflessly serve. The joy which is shared by the members of the congregation will sustain them as they work in the name of Christ. In the communion which binds them together, they will conquer all that is evil. Through this love, as it spreads to many places, a power will exist that is beyond the comprehensive of man. As this power becomes a reality, the Kingdom of God will come upon this earth. All this service rendered in the name of Christ can remain agape only if it is rooted and constantly nourished by the fellowship of Christ which is bestowed in the service of worship. Thus worship is the constant communing with Christ.

Christ's coming is made available and present in man's life through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is Christ present within man to work out his life. Saint Paul wrote, "It is no longer I who

¹⁵Bishop, op. cit., p. 155.

live, but Christ who lives in me."¹⁶ The Holy Spirit must be present in worship to unite man with Christ. The measure of the Church's power is the measure of its union with her Lord. It is as the body of Christ, indwelt by His Spirit and reflecting His glory, that the people fulfill their vocation in the world. As man participates in worship, the Holy Spirit will help him to know God, and in turn man will see what it means to live in Christ.

III. TRANSFORMED THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Only in recent years has any deep concern been given to the work of the Holy Spirit in worship. To the early Christians and the early church, the presence of the Holy Spirit was the essence of worship. For the early Christians, only through the presence of the Holy Spirit could the real presence of Christ be made known. At the New Delhi Assembly of the World Council of Churches, this statement of faith was made, calling on Christians everywhere to acknowledge in their witness "that the Holy Spirit will lead men to where Christ already is, and will enable men to bear their witness in every place to the light shining in the darkness which the darkness cannot overcome."¹⁷

After Pentecost, the disciples were conscious of the presence

¹⁶Galatians 2:20.

¹⁷W. A. Visser't Hooft, New Delhi Speaks About Christian Witness (New York: Association Press, 1962), p. 14.

of God within them. He became for them the life-giver, that activating Spirit by which they lived and moved and had their being. Paul writes in a letter to the Corinthians that the Holy Spirit is no less than the presence of the Father and the Son.¹⁸ Like the wind, His presence is unseen; yet the results of His activity are everywhere. The Holy Spirit was an entirely new feeling and experience for the people of the early church. This presence came through participation in the Lord's Supper and in the proclamation of His Word.

In many traditions, the worship service is begun by a prayer which calls upon the Holy Spirit to become a reality within the life of each worshiper. In this reality the Holy Spirit then reveals to the worshiper the Exalted Christ. The worshiper no longer sees himself as a separate entity, but he is brought into a personal relationship with Christ through faith, and is joined to the Church Universal. "No action of the Church can be conceived of as taking place outside the work of the Holy Spirit, and no liturgy can omit reference to Him."¹⁹ A true celebration of the liturgy is a celebration of the Holy Spirit who gives life to the words that are spoken.

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, Christ is able to dwell

¹⁸II Corinthians 3:18 "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."

¹⁹Max Thurian, The Eucharistic Memorial (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1961), I, 171.

among His own, for He is still present with man in Spirit. By the gift of the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Incarnation remains actual. The Incarnation was not a once and for all event, but a continual process of Christ being made real within the lives of those who heed His call. In the liturgy the worshiper comes face to face with the Incarnation. As he confesses, affirms, and offers his life, the Holy Spirit, acting through him, makes real the presence of Christ. He becomes a member of the community and a part of the body of Christ. Worship is more than the repeating of creeds, or singing or listening; it brings recognition of the continuing presence of Christ.

The objective work of worship is that of Christ. The subjective work is that of the Holy Spirit who enables the community of believers to hear and experience Christ's Word as God's Word. Hearing this Word, the members are able to participate personally. In order for worship to be meaningfully experienced, the availability of the Holy Spirit must be made known. Through the liturgy, Christ (the Word Incarnate) is proclaimed in the Word and the Sacrament, yet the congregation is able to receive Christ as a living reality only by the power invested in the Holy Spirit.

For the most part, the contemporary church has lost its expectancy of receiving the Holy Spirit. The minister directs the liturgy in a set pattern while the congregation remains unaware of the power which is present and awaiting acknowledgement. The prayers and petitions which are directed toward the Holy Spirit must be said with a feeling of expectancy; for as the Holy Spirit is experienced,

the meaning of 'agape' becomes real to each worshiper.

The liturgist must always remember that prayer is only a means of expressing to God a desire to be united with Him. "The reality of worship," states Raymond Abba, "depends, not upon the presence or absence of a liturgy, but upon the union of the worshiper through the power of the Holy Spirit. Worship in spirit and truth means worship, under the direction and constraint of the Spirit, of the true God - God as He has revealed Himself through His saving acts recorded in the Bible, and supremely in Him who is the way, the truth, and the life."²⁰ The measure of the church's power is the measure of her union with her Lord. It is as the body of Christ, incorporated by His Spirit and reflecting His glory, that the people of God are able to fulfill their vocation in this world.

The Church today needs a new understanding of the early Christian proclamation - "no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit."²¹ Through the power invested in the Holy Spirit, man is able and motivated to offer himself to a life in Christ. The presence of the Spirit moves the worshiper into the realm of love. The worshiper is called to love his neighbor as Christ first loved him.

In a unison prayer offered by the Old Catholic Church, the

²⁰ Raymond Abba, Principles of Christian Worship (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 9.

²¹ I Corinthians 12:3.

centrality of the Holy Spirit in worship is beautifully shown. The prayer is a plea by the worshipers for the Holy Spirit to give them power made manifest with Christ.

Heavenly Father, give us thy Holy Spirit, that He may enable us to make known to thee our needs by our prayers and supplications; that He Himself may intercede for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, sanctifying us and keeping our hearts, our thoughts and our desires; and to manifest to the world thy light in Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord, who livest and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, in God now and always and unto ages of ages.²²

In this prayer can be seen the Holy Spirit continuing the work of Jesus Christ after His departure from this earth. The Holy Spirit is a reminder to man of Jesus' teaching and sacrifice, and a guarantor of His authority and gifts of power to fulfill His commands.²³ In today's church, the hope is that the Holy Spirit will guide truth-seeking men into a new understanding and a new realization of the divine purpose. The Holy Spirit is contemporary, contemporary in the sense of still being the force which guides man in his struggle to meet the Master. The Holy Spirit continues, through the worship service and other means, to direct man's effort to be the body of Christ.

How does all this fit when speaking of the church's doctrine of the Trinity? "The doctrine of the Trinity affirms that God the

²²Taken from the liturgy of the Old Catholic Church.

²³L. Harold DeWolf, A Theology of the Living Church (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 273.

Father is the ground of all existence, all truth and all hope, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is His word Incarnate, and the Holy Spirit is the present Comforter, guide and enabling power.²⁴

God has shown Himself in three roles. God, the Father, who is the creator and judge, and in whom the very being of the world is grounded. God is also known as the Son, the God who humbles Himself in love for His children, speaking at definite times in history, supremely in the personage of Jesus Christ. The third way in which God is known to man is the Holy Spirit, the sacred presence within ourselves. As God acts within man, he in turn responds to Him in love. It becomes the power of the liturgy to enable man to experience the power of God in the Holy Spirit, enabling man to love.

When this divine Spirit works through human beings, this becomes the Word of God. The content of this Word must always be Jesus Christ, for by His being eternally the Word of God, He determines beforehand all that can become the Word of God. Only when this Word is received within a personal confrontation, from the Spirit of God into the spirit of man, does the word become fixed as the Word of God. The Word becoming flesh is ever the criterion of the Christian worship, and the Spirit becoming flesh is ever the criterion of the Christian form of the Word of God. As man reaches out through his worship, he meets the Word Incarnate. This meeting is made possible through the work of the Holy Spirit. God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy

²⁴Ibid., p. 274.

Spirit, all work together to enable man to become one with Him. The response of man is his participation in the Word and work of Christ. When speaking of the Holy Spirit, the liturgy refers to those men who belong to Jesus Christ in a special way that they have the freedom to recognize His Word, His work, and His message.

The real presence of Christ then must be the real presence of the Holy Spirit. The primary location of the Spirit is the liturgy. The liturgy is the presence of the body of Christ in man's midst as the Holy Spirit. The Church offers bread and wine at the altar; in doing so each member of the congregation offers himself. At Holy Communion, the congregation unifies itself by all members partaking of the one loaf and of the one cup. They are the vehicles and means utilized by the Holy Spirit to create and re-create the unity of men as the body of Christ.

The essence of worship then is the decent to man of the Father's love in the Word, and the ascent of the worshiper to the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. The response of man to God's love is love. If men are to answer the divine call to worship, they must submit to the unifying work of Christ. Those who are to become the living stones in the Spiritual Temple of God must allow themselves to be reshaped by grace so that they are built up in one whole dedicated to the glory of the father. This is the challenge for the worshiper today; the response to the love of God as expressed in Jesus Christ made manifest to us by the Holy Spirit in love.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TASK AHEAD

It is the goal of this most sacred Council to intensify the daily growth of Catholics in Christian living; to make more responsive to the requirements of our time those Church observances which are open to adaptation; to nurture whatever can contribute to the unity of all who believe in Christ; and to strengthen those aspects of the Church which can help summon all of mankind into her embrace. Hence the Council has special reasons for judging it a duty to provide for the renewal and fostering of the liturgy.

For it is through the liturgy, especially the divine Eucharistic Sacrifice, that the 'work of our redemption is exercised.' The liturgy is thus the outstanding means by which the faithful can express in their lives, and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church. It is of the essence of the Church that she be both human and divine, visible and yet invisibly endowed, eager to act and yet devoted to contemplation, present in this world and yet not at home in it... Day by day the liturgy builds up those within the Church into the Lord's holy temple, into a spiritual dwelling for God (cf. Eph 2:21-22) - an enterprise which will continue until Christ's full stature is achieved (cf. Eph 4:13).¹

These words by the Fathers of Vatican II in the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy" are an indication of the concern which has been expressed for renewal in worship and for Christian unity. The invitation issued by Pope John XXIII to that portion of Christendom not in communion with Rome, to send observers to the Second Vatican Council was received by the Protestant Church with great joy and anticipation. Christians around the world took this offer of communion as an indication of the Holy Father's concern for Christian oneness. At

¹Walter M. Abbott (ed.), The Documents of Vatican II (New York: Guild Press, 1966), pp. 137-138.

Vatican II, there was established a Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. For the first time, hope for a United Church of Christ was expressed.

Although Pope John made it clear, when stating his intentions concerning a Council, that the ultimate objective was unity, he realized as well as anyone that this goal was still a long way off. He, therefore, set before the members of the Council an immediate objective. This goal was the renewal of the Church, out of which, it is hoped, will come a better understanding and a greater desire for unity.

Liturgy study occupied a great amount of time, not only in days of preparation, but in the Council sessions themselves. The Church Fathers sought to determine the relevance of the past to the contemporary setting. A tremendous amount of biblical and historical research was undertaken. This is one of the tasks of the liturgical movement, in its effort to develop a meaningful worship for the present. Some time and effort must be spent studying and analysing the past. This does not require a duplication of the liturgy, but rather an analysis and examination of it in an effort to determine its significance and meaning for those it served. Instead of going back to a "golden age" in worship, the power and potential of that age must be transposed into the idiom of the contemporary setting.

Any liturgy which is developed must keep as its essence the meaning which the worshiper experiences. This is why the time and effort must not be spent on analyzing the forms and structures of the

past, not to deny the importance of this; but time and also concern must also be spent seeking the avenues of fulfillment, which are possible in the liturgy. Too many contemporary liturgies begin with changing and updating language or structure without first taking seriously the essence of worship.² Careful consideration must first be given to enabling an individual to come to an understanding of what it means to be a Christian. The importance lies not in the performance of the liturgy but in the change which takes place in the worshiper's life. The sharing in the celebration as the body of Christ must always be the primary and essential point of worship. Only after this is thoroughly ingrained in man can there develop a meaningful liturgy.

Perhaps the best way to bring about this renewal in the meaning of worship is to make plain the full implications of the eucharistic liturgy. Max Thurian states, "The only liturgy admissible is a liturgy whose theological significance is clearly explicit, which expresses a genuine sacramental life, which links the local congregation with the Church of all times and places and which builds up a holy people."³ As the Church looks forward, it must see the

²John A.T. Robinson, Liturgy Coming to Life (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), p. v: "I am still convinced that the place to begin is with bringing out the meaning of what is done rather than with changing what is said. Clothing the action with the right words is indeed of vital importance, when we know what we want to express."

³Max Thurian, The Eucharistic Memorial (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1961), I, 169.

sacramental life as it relates to the building up of the congregation. Through the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, ordinary things change, ordinary people become strong, and this ordinary world becomes the Kingdom of God.⁴

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper allows the worshipers to see the potential which his own individual life can attain. As he confesses his sins to God through Jesus Christ, there begins to appear a glimpse of what is to come. No longer must he be concerned with his past life; but through the forgiving nature of God, he can begin a new life. The first action of this new life is to proclaim his faith through song and word. Forgiven, he begins to learn of the power which his life in Christ can have. As he then approaches the communion rail, a new life in Christ is offered to him. The old life of sin is past away and a new life following the way of Christ begins. Christ is offered to him, and it is up to him whether or not he accepts it. He then leaves the communion rail a new man ready to be the body of Christ in the world. Supported by the promise of Christ that He will be present in the world, the worshiper is no longer an ordinary person; but a Christian.

The fulfillment of the sacramental liturgy is accomplished as the congregation becomes a single unit as the body of Christ. This can only be accomplished if the liturgy is active, that is, if something is happening within the worshiping congregation, to the

⁴Robinson, op. cit., p. xii.

people and by the people. In response to the initiation of God's love, the congregation is then able to move out in unison to bring to reality this love. Without the actual experiencing of this activity, the worship service will be meaningless. Liturgy as activity is important, especially in the contemporary setting, for it must permit the congregation to overcome the finitude of life as they become united in infinite love.

This chapter will present some possibilities for liturgical renewal in the Church. The first section will deal with the criteria which can be used for renewal of the liturgy. Second, taking these criteria, I will examine the question, How can the United Methodist Church make use of them? And third, a concern will be expressed for the task which lies ahead in the Church Universal. Some suggestions will be stated as possible means for ecumenical liturgical unity.

I. CRITERIA FOR LITURGICAL RENEWAL

Through the worship service, the congregation perceives the true nature of reality and, in turn, responds to it.⁵ In his everyday life, man is aware, in an abstract way, that God is at work in the world, but in the liturgy an individual comes into direct confrontation with God. In this confrontation, man is able to accept his sinfulness and know that he is forgiven by God. This meeting of man with God must be the purpose of worship. This message must be

⁵ James White, "The Crisis in Worship" (Dallas: Perkins School of Theology, 1967), p. 1.

enacted in a form and proclaimed in an idiom which is comprehensible to the worshipers. In the contemporary setting, the task of the Church becomes the developing of criteria by which the liturgy may be renewed and rediscovered.

In the book, An Experimental Liturgy, the authors list five guiding principles which they employed when developing a liturgy.⁶ These principles provide a good beginning for this part of the discussion. (1) That the liturgy should not be restricted by too close an adherence to any one tradition but should seek to be informed by the fullness of Christian belief and practices as it is preserved, fragmented in the separated branches of Christianity. (2) Liturgical revision should rest upon a comparative study of all liturgies, both ancient and modern, both Eastern and Western. (3) There should be concern with the biblical basis of the Christian faith. (4) Revision should rest upon a full understanding of the structure of the rite and of the Church's teaching about it. (5) That knowledge of eucharistic theology alone is insufficient. There should be an understanding of the nature of the Church which performs this most holy act. The authors point out that there is no perfect liturgy in existence which holds universal authority comparable with scripture. In developing an experimental liturgy, they feel that as much freedom as possible should be allowed regarding ceremony and rubrics of local customs; that there should be removable of obscure accretions which

⁶G. F. Cope, J. G. Davies and D. A. Tytler, An Experimental Liturgy (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1958), pp. 7-8.

no longer have value; that a plan of progression ought to be followed which restores much of the original intent; and that the symbolic meaning of worship to the twentieth century man must be brought up to date.⁷

To add to the work done by Davies, Cope, and Tytler, an individual should examine the excellent piece of work done by the Catholic Fathers at Vatican II.⁸ The reform of the Mass by Vatican II seeks to follow the original structure of Christian worship, which derived its structure from the Gospel. The reformers of the liturgy sought to put themselves into the past and into Scripture to determine a model for modern needs. Hans Kung reminded the Council that the original Mass was a simple and universally intelligible celebration consisting of thanksgiving and a sacred meal.⁹ The essential elements of the Mass were the eucharista - a single prayer of thanksgiving and the partaking of the sacred elements. The language of the Mass was the language of the people, and everybody received the bread and wine. Later the Mass became rigid and there occurred a

⁷Ibid., p. 51.

⁸See books by Abbott, op. cit.,; Hans Kung, The Council in Action (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963); and Anthony Lee, Vatican II, The Theological Dimensions (Thomist Press, 1963). For some excellent work done in the area of liturgical renewal see books by Robinson, op. cit.,; Massey Sheppard (ed.), Liturgical Renewal of the Church (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960); and S. F. Winward, The Reformation of Our Worship (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965).

⁹Kung, op. cit., p. 97.

gradual estrangement between the altar and the people. The original meaning of the Mass as celebration in thanksgiving and commemoration was lost. The people were no longer participants, but spectators. The meaning became obscured by the insertion of new elements, by the continued use of an uncomprehensible liturgical language, by the practice of praying the most important parts of the Mass silently, and by the gradual neglect of the commemorative aspect of the Mass. With this in mind, the Council sought to reform the liturgy and to make it a more meaningful experience.

The Fathers had to determine the meaning of the liturgy in the life of the Church. Liturgical worship is simply the realization of the Church at the point where it is most herself - the encounter with God in Christ. The Church realizes herself in and through liturgical worship; it is here that the Church truly becomes what it was intended to be, mainly the People of God - the body of Christ on earth. The Church's liturgical worship is the worship of Christ Himself in the Son's relationship to the Father, in and through the Holy Spirit. Determining these factors, the Council Fathers were able to develop a liturgy grounded in tradition but created for the present.

Using the works of the previously mentioned men as a guide, I would like to list several criteria for liturgical renewal in the church today.

1. Congregational study of meaning of worship. Congregations must seek to determine what worship is, is to discover its meaning.

Each congregation must ask itself. Why have men found it necessary to worship throughout the ages? and Are those reasons valid for us? Before worship can mean anything to them, they must first understand why it is that they do worship. Too many people today have not or can not answer these questions.

In seeking to uncover the nature of worship, a re-discovery of its corporateness must be found. The liturgy of the Church is the worship of the community as a whole. It can never be the action of the isolated individual because it is the worship offered and continued by Christ Himself in the name of all men. The Church, therefore, is a community of persons assembled to see and listen, to respond and to join in the common worship together as the body of Christ. If the individual worshiper feels alienated from the person on his right and on his left, then the purpose worship is not fulfilled.

It is the responsibility of each local congregation to take it upon themselves to study in the area of worship. The presence of God is not something which just happens, but it happens because men of like minds earnestly seek Him, petitioning him to be a part of their lives. The liturgy is the place to begin to have this miracle occur.

2. Regular administration of the Lord's Supper. It must be remembered that there is no short-cut to a life in Christ. When congregations are denied the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper on a regular basis, then they are not receiving the full possibility of

worship. Being true to the worship of God requires both the Proclamation of the Word and the Celebration of the Eucharist. The encounter with Christ by the congregation at the service of the Lord's Supper is the concrete involvement of the people as His Body. Only as people hear His Word and kneel at the altar to partake of His Body and Blood can they be united in Him.

As sons of Wesley, the Methodists need to re-capture the concern of Wesley for the service of the Lord's Supper. Wesley would be quite unhappy to see that the Service for Morning Prayer has replaced the Lord's Supper in Methodist practice. Yet, some churches are beginning to offer an early morning Communion Service though most of these are very sparsely attended. As more congregations become involved in a study of worship, they will see the need for a regular celebration of the Lord's Supper.

To this end, congregations must be educated in the theological perspective of the Eucharist. For when the Word of God is heard and understood in real repentance and faith, when the Lord's Supper becomes the medium of the presence of that Word in Christ, then the church can become the people of God. In this new state they become related to Him in confession and trust; and, in turn, become related to one another in love and concern. This power becomes possible when a congregation can feel the presence of a transcendent, loving God in the liturgy. For only God is holy, and only He can change life through the potential of His presence in worship. Thus, there needs to be a return to the uniting of Word and Sacrament in the worship

experience. For through these symbols, Christ is present in His Church.

3. Examination of liturgical language. Another area in which the Church must seek renewal is the area of contemporary language. There need to be new and experimental liturgies alongside the old, not replacing the old (any more than the Revised Standard Version replaced the King James); but putting new light on the liturgy.

The Council Fathers at Vatican II sought to deal with this problem. The result was that, while Latin is to remain the official language of the Roman rite, a wide opening was made for the use of the vernacular. In Article 36.2 of the Schema on the Liturgy these words were stated: "Since the use of the mother tongue, whether in the Mass, the administration of the sacraments, or other parts of the liturgy, may be frequently of great advantage to the people, the limits of its employment may be extended. This extension will apply in the first place to the readings and directives, and to some of the prayers and chants, according to the regulations on this matter to be laid down separately in subsequent chapters."¹⁰ In great part the amount of vernacular to be used is left to the discretion of the bishops.

The feeling of most Protestants is that they already use the vernacular, yet one of the most frequent complaints voiced by the modern worshiper concerns a lack of meaningful language. The language

¹⁰Abbott, op. cit., p. 50.

used by previous generations is not the vernacular of today. The language and wording of the sixteenth century is for the most part not understandable or meaningful. Though the basic questions of life remain the same, the needs of a technological age are certainly different from that of an agricultural setting and the expressions of these needs in worship must be different. This does not mean an individual can do what he likes to the liturgy. Too many experimental liturgies today seek to make the liturgy relevant to the contemporary setting without retaining the essential meaning of worship.

When re-discovering the essence of Wesleyan worship, an individual must not be so intent on a return to language as a return to meaning. As the meaning is discovered, the language will be a natural outcome of the new life found in meaningful worship. If worship is the response of the people to God's initiative, then the language must be the language of the everyday conversation. It must express the joys and sorrows, fears and happiness, and the anxiety and love of modern man.

Certain guidelines must be developed as the liturgy is linguistically updated. As was previously stated, language is only a means to an end, not an end in itself. The use of language which is offensive or archaic is detrimental to the worshiping experience. Language should only be used which is beneficial in allowing the worshiper to experience the reality of God. Each congregation must determine for themselves the style of language which will be meaningful for them. Using the post as a guide, they must seek to make the language of

worship relevant to their particular situation.

4. A return to scripturally based worship. Liturgical renewal has sought to restore, and rightly so, worship that is scripturally based. Not only is there a trend to the reading of more than one scripture in the worship service, but to a more wholly and totally based scriptural worship. The thinking today emphasizes that man meets God in the form of historical events in the Scripture. God is the God who acts and speaks. Through the events recorded in the Old Testament and New Testament, man is confronted by God as He speaks and acts out His purpose in history. The liturgy is based upon the premise that in God's Word man becomes aware of what he must do to live a righteous and godly life.

Much can be learned from the research done by the Catholic researchers at Vatican II. They were greatly interested in the worship of the early church as it related to the Scripture. Yet the Council Fathers felt that not only the church historians should know the Bible, but that the laity should also be informed and instructed. Article 35.1 of the Constitution reads: "In sacred celebration there is to be more reading from the holy scripture, and it is to be more varied and suitable."¹¹ They go on to state that the reading of Scripture should be of paramount importance in the celebration of the liturgy.

Of particular importance for the recovery of the centrality of

¹¹Ibid., p. 149.

Scripture in worship is the restoration of preaching. The theological basis for that restoration is the doctrine that Christ is present not only in the sacraments, but also in his Word, since it is He Himself who speaks when the Holy Scripture is read in Church (Article 7).¹²

In Article 35.2 is stated, "The sermon, however, should draw its content mainly from scriptural and liturgical sources, and its character should be that of a proclamation of God's wonderful works in the history of salvation, the mystery of Christ, ever made present and active within us, especially in the celebration of the liturgy."¹³

The Protestant Church could certainly learn from this statement as to the place of the sermon. The sermon should be an integral part of the liturgy; it should be the Word of God spoken by man, not the word of man spoken by man.

5. New life must come to the meaning of the laity. Langdon Gilkey states in his book, How the Church Can Minister to the World without Losing Itself:

The Bible has become a strange and little used book; the family religion of Scripture readings and prayers has abdicated in favor of what the church can provide of Sunday; and the standards, values, and concepts of ordinary lay life are completely derived from secular society. Thus the average church-goer comes into church out of a life, not saturated with the holy, but quite devoid of all but secular content in ideas, experiences, and values... How can he, out of this secular inwardness, have an experience of God, of worship, from his own subjectivity, from himself alone-- how can he worship unless there are objective media for the holy? The sectarian layman is in the world now; and, as

¹²Ibid., pp. 140-141.

¹³Ibid., p. 149.

in each facet of the Church's life, this new social situation makes a vast difference. It means that in our day worship can occur only where some powerful symbolic mediation of the holy takes place.¹⁴

The laity must become the new priesthood sharing in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own role to play in the mission of the whole People of God in the Church and in the world. Too long has there been a separation between the clergy and laity in purpose and function.

The lay Apostolate must be educated. He must be knowledgeable to the meaning of the liturgy; so that he can be led into a full, conscious, and active participation in the liturgical celebration; and, in turn, become active in the church, community, family, youth, social milieu, and national and international affairs. The schima explicitly states that God's redemption in the world cannot take place without the participation of all Christians. The Church truly is the People of God praying and singing together, commemorating, offering up and eating together the Body and Blood of the Lord. Much of the failure of modern worship has come about as a result of the lack of participation by the laity in the liturgy. With the layman only a spectator, the power invested in the liturgy has been weakened. The liturgy must be the People of God working together in an effort to bring about the Kingdom on earth. To do this, the laity must feel they are a part of its reality.

¹⁴ Langdon Gilkey, How the Church Can Minister to the World Without Losing Itself (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), pp. 111-112.

6. The role of the Holy Spirit in worship. There needs to be more emphasis placed upon the role of the Holy Spirit within worship as it directs men to union with God.¹⁵ The prayers and petitions offered in the liturgy must take seriously the potential of the work of the Holy Spirit in worship. The Church is the Body of Christ thus present in its midst as the Holy Spirit. Therodore Wedel states it this way as he speaks of the role of the Holy Spirit in worship.

At the Holy Communion, the Church unifies itself by all members partaking of the one loaf and of the one covenant cup. Surely the real presence of the Spirit continue to abide in the fellowship of the Spirit throughout this action-drama; and even humbles things of earth, bread and wine, become action-symbols in the mystery, vehicles, and means utilized by the Spirit to create or re-create the unity of the body of Christ.¹⁶

Wesley struggled throughout his life with this dimension in worship, and Methodism since has sought to solve this dilemma. Worship has gone from a very structured worship in Wesley to a very unstructured service in the last half of the nineteenth century. What is needed is a worship service which systematically and orderly directs an individual in his struggle to live a Christian life, and at the same time allow for the spontaneous activity of the Holy Spirit. Study and time should be spent in helping to return to this balance.

7. The role of the congregation in worship. The final area in which the church must seek to renew itself is in the area of con-

¹⁵See Chapter VII for a description of the theology of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁶Shepherd, op. cit., p. 15.

gregational participation. In this area main-line Protestants might learn a great deal from the Pentecostal groups. Dr. James White states:

There are groups within our society where the worship is definitely of a 'turned-on' variety. I speak of the worship of many of the Negro churches, the Penecostal groups, and churches retaining a strong revivalistic fervor. There is no lack of participation in their worship. The foot-tapping music leaves no doubt about that. You 'get with it' in a hurry. And something happens, maybe not just what we might like, but undeniably each service is a happening. Many of the large American denominations had these qualities in their worship once. Whatever we may think about revivalism, it knew that to move people spiritually you have to move them physically. Most of us got too sophisticated for that and our problems in worship today are often the effects of middle-class self-consciousness.¹⁷

What Dr. White is emphasizing is a direct participation of the congregation in worship. Too long have people come to worship expecting the minister to do all the work and not expecting anything to happen in their lives. Many youth of todays "happening" generation avoid worship because they see it as hypocritical. The worshipers speak about what should happen in their lives, but upon leaving the service they return to the same style of living. No real change has occurred.

What is needed is for congregations to experience worship in which they really become involved, without inhibitions and fears. If and when this happens, congregations will then be more apt to leave the sanctuary better prepared to put their religion to work. If nothing is expected of them in worship, then nothing will come outside

¹⁷White, op. cit., p. 3.

of worship. As ministers seek renewal within their congregations, one of the first places to begin is in the area of worship, studying with the congregation in an effort to understand what it means to actively worship God. As worship is set afire, then the entire life of the congregation begins to burn with a fervor to serve.

The time is ripe for liturgical renewal. As Dr. White writes, the younger generation is not willing to put up with present worship practices.¹⁸ If each congregation would take it upon themselves to earnestly seek to discover the meaning of worship for themselves in their existential situation, then I feel the Church would become a vital organ in society today. All dimensions of the Church life are tied up in worship. For the Christian, worship is both a witness to the world outside the Church and also a renewing summons to believers within the Church to grow in love. Many of the youth and adults of today are interested in this potential of worship. The ministry must become equally concerned if the Church is to grow to meet the needs of an expanding age. Men must come prepared to throw off that which has separated him from God, and be ready to lead a new life in Christ.

Taking the previously stated criteria for liturgical renewal, I would now like to place them as possibilities in the worship service used by the Methodist Church. Each congregation must study the liturgy for themselves, yet there are some general statements which

¹⁸Ibid., p. 4.

can be made.

II. WORSHIP AS THE SERVICE OF THE COMMUNITY

In order for a congregation to come into the closest possible relationship one with another, its internal and external life must be united. Only in recent years has the church returned to this practice. Whenever a conference is to be, the celebration of the Gospel is a vital part of the life of that Conference. When a congregation studies the potential power of worship to its existence, the result is a renewed outlook on its total life. Wesley sought to instill this within the early Methodists; but in his fear that worship in America would come to complete chaos, he set down an over-cautious and too rigid standard for the people to follow. The people felt that they had to use the Anglican Liturgy verbatim or not at all. This came as a result of Wesley's instruction to use it on every Lord's Day and not to change it. As a result, Methodists have never taken too seriously a strict adherence to formal worship. Had more people been aware of how Wesley actually led services, I feel fewer problems would have come about in Methodist worship. It must always be remembered that Wesley was very conscious of the power of the Holy Spirit in worship and relied upon extemporaneous prayer and congregation singing to help people worship, though he knew the importance of maintaining order and continuity within the worship experience.

One outcome of studying in the area of worship will be a new

perspective on missions. As the previously mentioned criteria for renewal are put into practice, a new vitality will overcome the church. God invites his people to serve him. The congregation by approaching and uniting with God offer their services to him. In the receiving of the elements of the Lord's Supper, the congregation is made aware of the gift of God's love to them and the obligation they have to respond to their gift in service. The final act of worship is the self-dedication of the individual to actively seek to bring about the Kingdom of God here upon this earth, the offering of the self to do those things necessary and required to involve all men in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

When the social implications of liturgical renewal are seen some specific goals must be considered. Often this aspect of worship is passed by and forgotten. Father Louis Boyer puts it this way:

Perhaps the greatest and certainly the most difficult problem by liturgical piety is the one which awaits us when we go out of the church after the liturgical celebration is finished. For, if there is any one point that our study has brought out, it is that the importance of the liturgical celebration itself implies a correlative importance in what we do, after the liturgical celebration, in daily living.¹⁹

The liturgical renewal does involve a congregation in the social witness and social action of service. The Gospel of Jesus Christ involves all of life, not just an hour of Sunday morning. As men open up their hearts to God and make their desires known to God, the outcome of this action is the ordering of life in outreach.

¹⁹ Louis Boyer, Liturgical Piety (South Bend, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1955), p. 257.

Congregations need to take seriously their mission to the world. Worship must relate the congregation to their every day lives -- to their work and play. If it is unrelated to the test of life, then the life of that congregation is more than likely dead.

In his book, Revolution in a City Parish, Abbe Michonneau gives this description of what he calls a typical church worship service.

The low Mass is going on. A few men are standing up at the back of the church and gazing around. Further up, the church is pretty well filled, with women mostly; some are saying their beads, to the accompaniment of clicking and audible Hail Marys. Some are reading prayer books or missals. Some are seated while the rest kneel; for no apparent reason there are periodic reverses of position. Only during the reading of the Gospel is the whole church in the same position... Obviously (the priest) is in isolation, cut off from the people behind him. Obviously the people in that church are not a community, but a mere collection of individuals, praying individually as best they can.²⁰

An equally depressing description of Protestant worship could be given. In such a worship setting it would be very difficult to discover the social implications. No doubt that many individuals find help and strength in such worship, but they leave the worship service they too often leave as an individual and not as a member of a united body of Christ in mission to the world. Renewal in worship must mean a renewal in the congregation's understanding of themselves as the disciples of Christ to a needy world.

When congregations ignore the social implications of the liturgy, they fail to offer themselves as a "reasonable, holy, and

²⁰ Abbe Michonneau, Revolution in a City Parish (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1949), p. 26.

living sacrifice" to God. For each time a congregation receives the bread and wine, they are by that act sent to be witnesses of Christ. It is not something which is elective, but is mandatory. As men live their faith, the world sees a new possibility life abundant. This does not mean that the congregation becomes pious in their action, but that they seek to live to the best of their ability that which has been proclaimed to them in the example of Jesus. This is not an easy task, but a necessary one if love, with its all potential, is to become a reality to all of mankind.

The task of each congregation then is to study seriously and thoroughly in the area of worship, and then to put this study into practice. Each congregation must take a realistic look at its worshipping life and rediscover those elements which have separated worship from their total life in Christ. It is as congregations begin to see worship as the center of their life that their total life becomes vital and relevant.

III. A STATEMENT ON THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

The unity of the Christian Church is shown nowhere more clearly than in the reality of the liturgy. This reality can be witnessed in God's self-communication of Himself in Christ for the formation of the congregation as a united body of Christ. A United Church of Christ will come when men are willing to kneel together at the communion rail in partaking the body and blood of Christ. Other differences will be more easily overcome because there is a common ele-

ment joining men together.

The most significant work done thus far in the area of ecumenical unity in worship was done in Montreal in 1962 at the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order.²¹ The Lausanne and Edinburgh conferences had laid the ground-work for some significant work to be done in Montreal. The belief of the conference at Montreal was that worship is deeply relevant for the daily life of modern man, yet the liturgical forms and language were in need of transformation. As a result of this conviction, the representatives at the Conference made the following statement:

a. In Christian worship, God comes to us in Christ through the Holy Spirit, sustains us through his grace, establishes us in fellowship with him and with one another, and empowers us for service in the world... Christian worship is, therefore, a service to God the Father by men redeemed by His Son, who are continually finding new life in the power of the Holy Spirit.

b. Christian worship, as a participation in Christ's own self-offering, is an act formative of Christian community - an act, moreover, which is conducted within the context of the whole Church, and which represents the one, catholic church. Ecclesiastical division among the churches, personal estrangement, and social division based upon class, race or nation contradict true worship, because they represent a failure fully to carry out the common ministry of reconciliation to which we are all called in Christ.

c. Christian worship in the form of preaching is based upon the commandment of Jesus Christ and his promise that he himself will be present with the hearers, working in them by his word...

d. It is our participation in worship of Christ's people through word and sacrament that makes possible our ministry in various kinds of worship in smaller groups and in individual

²¹

P. C. Rodgers and Lukas Vischer, The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order (New York: Association Press, 1964), pp. 69-80.

devotion... Thus the public worship of the congregation and the private worship of individuals, families or groups are mutually dependent as necessary parts of the total ministry of Christ's people.

e. Christian worship is the act by which the Church recognizes its identification with the whole creation and offers it to God in service...

f. Christian worship, set forth in Baptism and celebrated in the Eucharist, is grounded and centered in the historical ministry of Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection, and his exalted and continuing ministry. Such worship always includes the gathering of Christ's people, the preaching of his word, participation in Christ's self-offering and intercession for all men, and thanksgiving with joy.

g. Christian worship is at once remembrance, communion and expectation. It points beyond the present moment to the tasks of Christian witness which lie before us, as we join in Christ's ministry to the world, and as we look to the consummation of God's kingdom; for this side of that kingdom all our doings in the Church are but partial anticipation of the glory which is to come.

May Christians, and Methodists upon who this discussion of worship has centered, seek to make these statements a working reality.

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